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## Frank Reade, Jr., With His New Steam Man in CENTRAL AMERICA.

By "NONAME."



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# FRANK READE, JR.,

## With His New Steam Man in Central America.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His New Steam Man in No Man's Land; or, On a Mysterious Trail," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### A STRANGE STORY FROM YUCATAN.

FRANK READE, JR., the distinguished inventor of many wonderful machines, and particularly the new Steam Man, sat in his library one winter's day reading a newspaper.

His wife sat near him engaged in some light needle work. She looked up to see a peculiar expression upon her husband's handsome face.

"Well, that is strange," exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., with a whistle of surprise. "I am positive that is my old friend, Buckden, whom I knew at college. Upon my word, this breaks me all up."

"What is it, Frank?" asked Mrs. Reade, with interest.

"Why, Tony Buckden, an old college mate of mine, it seems has turned his wits to mining engineering. This has taken him down to Central America, to Yucatan, and a cablegram has just been received in New York, stating that Tony had become separated from his party and lost in the jungle. For six weeks he was searched for in vain."

"How terrible."

"It is more than likely that he has fallen a prey to wild beasts. Yet his father, the millionaire, Thomas Buckden, of New York, comes out with an offer of \$50,000 to the person who will furnish positive proof that his son is alive, and bring him safely home."

"That is a large reward," ventured Mrs. Reade. "I hope somebody will win it."

"Poor Tony!" exclaimed Frank, with emotion. "I declare I almost feel it my duty to go to his rescue."

"What! leave home again so soon?"

"Yet what is my duty, dear wife? It would seem that my dear friend's life is at stake. Ought I not to sacrifice something to save him?"

"What? You don't really think of going yourself?"

"I don't know," replied Frank, agitatedly pacing the floor. "I don't see who else can go and stand the rigors of that climate, dare the dangers of the jungle, the wild beasts and natives, and succeed in rescuing Tony."

"Are you sure that you can do it?"

"Ought I not to be reasonably sure? Have I not the Steam Man? Barney and Pomp I am sure would go with me."

"I hope you will not be so foolish as to go."

"I cannot say yet, my dear. I must satisfy myself completely that it is my duty. But I think I will walk down to the shop and see the Steam Man."

Frank bent down and kissed his wife and children and then left the house.

But just as he was going down the steps the mail carrier handed him a letter. Thus it was superscribed:

"TO FRANK READE JR.,  
READESTOWN, U. S. A."

Frank glanced at the foreign postmark and then broke the seal and read:

"DEAR FRIEND FRANK—I have been thinking of you of late and so feel constrained to write you. Moreover, I have a big scheme in which I want to interest you. While at Campeachy I fell in with a native trader from Valladolid. I was fortunate enough to do him a service and gain his friendship, and as a reward he accorded me a most astonishing tale and secret.

"He told me of his travels in the interior through jungle and swamp and forest. Also of the deadly animals and reptiles, the poisonous insects, and all the great dangers and pitfalls of the traveler in those latitudes.

"But more than this, he told me a wonderful story of a ruined city far up in the inaccessible table lands of Tanada.

"No doubt you are familiar with the accounts of the ancient cities of Palonque and others. Well, I imagine that this ruined city, Mazendia he called it, is one of the same sort.

"But Metlo, which is the name of my informant, described a vast temple in which he said there was vast treasures of gold, silver and jewels. But ever since discovered this temple has been a perfect nest of gigantic anacondas, and none of the natives have ever ventured into the place.

"Only one man ever lived to get out of the place, and he brought forth enough gold and jewels to insure his wealth for life.

"And there to-day lies untold wealth all in the possession of the anacondas.

"Many attempts have been made by the natives to destroy the stakes. A great body of men once attempted it. Six of the snakes were killed, but there seemed to be fully half a hundred left. The place seemed alive with them, and a dozen men falling victims to the monsters the attempt was abandoned.

"From that day to this no attempt has been made to recover the wealth. Metlo told me that no white man ever visited the region.

"The journey thither is a dangerous one on account of beasts and poisonous reptiles. Yet I believe it can be made. I have thought of you and your wonderful Steam Man and I feel sure that with the aid of you and your wonderful invention the treasure can be recovered.

"Now, Frank, I humbly beg of you if possible come down here and embark in this enterprise with me.

"Of course I have plenty of money, my father being a millionaire, but I have a powerful desire to visit the ruined city of Mazendia and do battle with those anacondas.

"I can do it alone, but I can succeed better with the aid of your Steam Man. As a favor I beg of you to write me at once to Campeachy. And now, my dear Frank, hoping to hear from you soon and favorably, I am as ever your friend.

TONY BUCKDEN."

Frank Reade, Jr., drew a deep breath as he finished reading this stirring epistle.

His eyes shone like stars and his whole being was stirred up.

It was certainly just the kind of a trip he would fancy. His adventurous spirit was fired and he muttered:

"That is a new field to explore. Ah! I would like to try it. But let me see! This letter has been coming by lazy stages and has been three weeks on the way. The cablegram was received a few days ago. Since then he has become lost in the jungle. Poor Tony! He must be rescued, and who is there to do it but me?"

Frank passed down the street in deep abstraction of mind.

The wind was chill and piercing, and there was snow in the air, as well as on the ground.

Suddenly around a corner came a man on the dead run.

But as his feet struck a bit of ice, they went out from under him, and he went sliding clear across the sidewalk and into a vast snow bank.

He was literally buried, but quickly dug himself out, spluttering and jawing like mad.

"I jes' pays yo' back fo' dat, I fish. Yo' jes' stop yo' foolin' wif dis chile, or yo' gits inter trubbel right away. Jes' yo' hear dat."

"Whurroo! Bejabers, it's a foine looking naygur yez are now. Ha, ha, ha! Yez would pass for a Santa Claus now to be shure. It's nearer white yez are than yez iver will be agin."

The victim of the snow bank, who, as the reader may have guessed, was a negro, dug the snow from his ears and eyes with supreme rage and disgust.

His companion was an Irishman, as his rich brogue would indicate. They had been having a lark at snow-balling, and the Irishman was chasing the negro around the corner when he took his fall.

It required but a glance for Frank Reade, Jr., to recognize the sky-larkers.

They were faithful servitors of his, and were named Barney and Pomp.

They were a legacy from Frank's father, and in all the famous young inventor's travels these servants had accompanied him.

Nobody could be more attached to a master than they were to Frank.

And now, as they caught sight of him approaching, they straightened up and both doffed their hats.

"I've done glad to see yo', Marse Frank."

"I hope yez air well, Misther Frank."

"Barney and Pomp!" cried Frank, eagerly. "You are just the fellows I want to see."

"Whurroo!" shouted Barney. "We're ready for anythin', Misther Frank, from a shindy to a ruction."

"I don't doubt it," replied Frank with a smile. "But here's a letter you may read, and tell me what you think of it."

"A letter!" gasped Barney.

He took the missive, and with Pomp at his shoulder, it was read by both. Frank watched them intently.

It was evident that the letter had made a powerful impression upon them.

"Well!" said Frank, when they had finished. "What do you think of it?"

"Be jabers I'd loike nothing betther than a go at some av them forty foot snakes. Shure it's a foine thrip that would be fer ther Stheam Man, Misther Frank."

"Ki dar, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, with eyes big as moons.

"Kain't say dis chile likes snakes, but yo' kin jes' bet he'd like to go dar jes' de same."

"Good!" cried Frank, "then if I conclude to go, you'll be all ready?"

"Yo kin jes' bet we will."

"Make no doubt av that."

"All right," said Frank, buttoning his coat closer, "be in readiness for I may decide to go."

The young inventor went on down the street.

In a few moments he came to the entrance of the big yards of the Reade Machine Shop.

Here at the entrance was the sumptuously furnished office. Frank entered, and an elderly patrician-looking gentleman who was pacing the floor, excitedly rushed up to him, crying:

"Are you Mr. Frank Reade, Jr.?"

"I am," replied Frank.

"Thank God you have come at last! Here is my card."

Frank took it and read:

"THOMAS BUCKDEN, NEW YORK CITY."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the young inventor, affably. "I am glad to welcome you here, Mr. Buckden. I believe I know your son well, and—"

"Oh, then you remember him well," cried the old gentleman, excitedly. "Thank Heaven for that! It will perhaps influence you to accede to the request I have to make. Oh, have—have you heard about my son?"

"I have heard that your son at last accounts had become lost in the jungle," replied Frank.

"Yes, yes, but we believe that he has been captured and held a prisoner by a wild tribe of savages known in that vicinity as the Tandas."

"It is quite likely."

"God grant it may be so. Oh, sir, listen to an agonized father's prayers. They tell me that you have the necessary equipments and are the only man who can go into those wilds and rescue my boy. Now I am a wealthy man and will pay—"

"Stop!" said Frank, imperatively. "Do not speak to me of pay! I knew your son; he was my college friend. I am only too glad to be able to go to his aid. I will say this much that before three days I shall start from New Orleans with my Steam Man on board a special steamer for Campeachy. You may if you choose see to the chartering of the steamer."

"A fleet if you wish it!" cried Mr. Buckden. "Oh, accept my deepest gratitude, Mr. Reade, and—bring my boy safely back."

"I will try," replied Frank.

"God bless you! But this wonderful Steam Man—I have never seen it."

"Come with me and I will be glad to show it to you," said Frank.

The young inventor led the way into a high roofed chamber with large doors which opened out into the yard.

Here was a sight such as Mr. Buckden had never seen the like of.

Standing in the center of the huge chamber was the Steam Man, the wonder of the century.

Since his western trip Frank had had the Man thoroughly repaired, and he was now in perfect condition to go out upon a trip.

"What do you think of him?" asked Frank.

"Simply wonderful!" replied Mr. Buckden, admiringly.

"If you will please step this way I will be glad to show you how he is made, and how he is able to go."

Frank led the way to the other side of the invention, and then with pardonable pride began explicitly to illustrate the fine points of the Steam Man.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN YUCATAN.

"You can see that he is constructed of plates of iron," said Frank, explanatively. "The legs are reservoirs for water, the furnace is in his chest and the smoke-pipe is his high hat. The gauge and indicator and throttle as well as steam chest are upon his back. In his mouth you will see the whistle."

"Then you will observe the steel driving rods down his legs. Of course it required some clever mechanical skill, but it can be seen at a glance that the machine is a practicable and feasible one. Just as much so as a locomotive."

"But ten times more wonderful," declared Mr. Buckden.

"Perhaps so. Now you can see that this is the wagon drawn by the Steam Man. In this wagon we carry a supply of coal, provisions and weapons. It is covered with a wire screen made of toughest steel and able to withstand a rifle ball."

"Through this opening in the front come the reins by which I drive the Man. The loop-holes in the sides are to fire through. Indeed, sir, the wagon is a small fortress in itself."

"I should say so," agreed the millionaire, "and what an admirable thing for this trip to Yucatan. In that land of poisonous reptiles and insects you can travel with immunity for it would puzzle a fly to get through that screen."

"I think it is the proper vehicle to travel with there," agreed Frank. "I believe that the region where your son will be likely to be found is one of level sort, flat table lands and plains."

"I believe so!"

"Ah, well, I will promise to do the best I can to save him."

"I thank you!"

A short while later Mr. Buckden took his departure.

Now that Frank's mind had been made up to take the trip, he lost no time in making preparations.

His father, when acquainted with the project, shook his head wistfully and said:

"I only wish I was as young and supple as I once was. How I'd like to go along!"

Barney and Pomp were over-enthusiastic over the project.

They were on hand promptly and assisted in the preparations.

The wagon was quite spacious and would carry a good deal. Provisions of a portable kind were packed, and plenty of ammunition.

Frank took care also to supply himself with drugs, for he did not forget that it was a malarial country that he was going to.

One thing was much in their favor, and that was the season of the year, it being winter.

Naturally the climate would not be so hot as in mid-summer.

When the report was spread that Frank Reade, Jr., and his Steam Man were going to Central America, the whole country was deeply interested.

The newspapers contained sketches of the young inventor and his famous machine.

People traveled hundreds of miles to Readestown for a look at the great Steam Man, the wonder of the age.

Scientists and explorers were continually besieging Frank, and the young inventor was quite worn out with the importunities of many when the day set for starting came.

At length the day came.

The Steam Man was placed aboard a special car and shipped to New Orleans direct.

Here Mr. Buckden had seen to the chartering of a steamer, aboard which the travelers went.

A tremendous crowd were at the wharf to cheer the voyagers.

It was a great day for New Orleans.

But at length the steamer's bell rung for starting.

Frank shook hands warmly with Mr. Buckden.

"I feel sure that you will rescue my son," declared the agonized father. "Heaven will aid you."

"I will do all in my power," said Frank, earnestly.

The schooner cast loose from the levee and shot down into the current. A band played, the people cheered, and Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp and the Steam Man were really off upon their trip to Central America.

A short while later they passed through the jetties at the delta of the Mississippi, and were in the waters of the Gulf.

The voyage to Campeachy was not a long one and most propitious.

When at length they entered the Bay of Campeachy the mild land breeze and a view of the palm-studded shore told them that they were in a tropical clime.

To the surprise of our voyagers, a warm reception was accorded them at Campeachy.

The Spanish people, ever of an enthusiastic, sport-loving turn, turned out in great force to welcome the distinguished visitors.

Word had been received by cablegram of their coming.

The governor of Campeachy warmly welcomed Frank, and for a few hours he was taken charge of by a committee and treated to many hospitalities.

There were many of his own people in the town also—merchants connected with houses in New York that dealt in dye stuffs, fruits and many of the products of the country.

Frank was deeply impressed with the warmth of the welcome given him.

He thanked all his benefactors kindly.

Then at the most favorable moment he returned to the ship.

The Steam Man was brought ashore and exhibited to the wondering gaze of the people.

But Frank knew the importance of quick and prompt action, and was not the one to readily accede to delay.

He knew that every moment was to the success of his enterprise of vital worth.

The people were all in sympathy with his enterprise.

Tony Buckden had been well and favorably known in Campeachy.

The young engineer was very popular there, and everybody was deeply interested in his fate.

But Senor Gonzales, one of the patrician gentlemen of Campeachy, came to Frank and said:

"Senor Americano, I hope you will succeed with all my heart. But do not be disappointed if you do not find the young Senor Buckden."

"Ah, then you think the chances are few?" asked Frank.

"I speak of what I know. The dangers of interior Yucatan are known to none better than I. I fear the worst for your friend."

"But I can at least try."

"Si Senor. May the mother be with you," said the Spanish gentleman, warmly.

Frank lost no time now in making the Steam Man ready for the start.

One day was consumed in making a map of his route, as nearly

correct as he could gather in detail from the natives who penetrated the interior.

Frank had decided to proceed at once to the table-land of Tanada. This point gained he believed that he could there learn something more of the fate of young Buckden.

He consulted with every native guide and traveler who knew anything about the route.

But now a curious thing occurred.

Every man he encountered seemed to have a different idea of the table-lands.

Some were inclined to Munchausen tales, while others pooh-poohed them.

At length in sheer disgust Frank said:

"There is just one thing about it. I have got to proceed solely upon my own judgment. If I adopted all the different plans accorded me I should lead a queer course to be sure."

So with this decision Frank left Campeachy.

Beyond the city, Frank found some fairly good roads which led through a section devoted to the culture of fruits and vegetables of various kinds.

Then immense fields of the coffee plant were passed and finally the country began to change its appearance.

Immense tropical forests were encountered. These of course the Steam Man could not travel through.

But generally paths were found leading through the hills, and in this way the explorers got along.

A wild region was encountered, wilder than even Barney and Pomp had seen in the heart of Africa.

They were at the moment near the verge of a mighty forest.

"Speaking of snakes," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "Just look at that."

All gazed in the direction indicated.

Hanging from the limb of a mighty forest monarch was a gigantic python or boa-constrictor.

In the monster's folds was a small wood fawn. It had been crushed all to jelly by the powerful folds of the reptile.

It reared its head and recoiled as the Steam Man appeared on the scene.

But it did not show fear, or seem to care in the least for the machine. Indeed, it acted defiant and ready for battle.

Barney shrugged his shoulders and picked up his rifle.

"Begorra, I'd loike to spoil the appetite av ther baste," he cried. "An' it's that same I'll do."

So with this the Celt up and fired at the python.

The effect was curious.

The huge snake received the bullet in its sinuous folds, and a jet of blood marked the course of the ball.

Hissing savagely with pain, the python released the wood fawn, and without an instant's warning charged directly at the man.

In an instant Frank saw that they had committed an indiscretion.

While to be sure they were protected by the steel screen of the wagon, yet it was easy to reckon the effect of the python's attack.

That monster's brown body came hurtling and hissing down the slope like an avalanche.

Swifter than a railroad train the enraged python charged upon its foe.

It would have required something more than an ordinary barrier to withstand such an attack.

Frank saw this and made quick action.

With quick hand, he seized the throttle rein and started the Steam Man ahead.

Then he turned him face on to the reptile. He had barely time to do this, when the monster struck the machine.

In a flash the folds of the reptile were wound about the Steam Man.

The foresight and wisdom of Frank's move were at once seen.

If the snake had struck the wagon, he might have crushed the screen with its Leviathan folds.

As it was, the air was instantly filled with the fumes of burning snake flesh.

The huge snake's body coming in contact with the almost red hot fire box of the Steam Man, received a terrific scorching.

For an instant his snakeship did not seem to mind this and made terrific blows with his head at the screen.

He strove in vain to reach the men within.

"Whurrol!" yelled Barney. "Yez did a wondherful thing thin, Misther Frank. Shure, the big devil is burnin' up."

"Golly sakes, dat am a fac!" cried Pomp, joyfully.

But Frank knew that the battle was not over yet by any means.

It had only just begun. The monster, feeling the terrible effect of the hot iron, with an almost human-like cry unwound itself quickly from the Steam Man.

It went twisting and rolling about the plain in agony for a few moments.

In its course bushes were uprooted, the ground was torn and the air filled with dust.

Frank knew that this would last but a few moments.

The enraged monster would soon recover and renew the attack with ten-fold fury.

So the famous inventor took up his elephant rifle and thrust an explosive shell into the breach.

Going to a loophole in the screen he took careful aim.

Crack!

The rifle spoke sharply. Straight to its mark went the shell. The

next moment as it exploded the air was full of shreds of snake flesh and flying dirt.

The shell had torn a hole in the python's side, but had not destroyed the monster's life.

Terribly enraged, the monster snake now seemed to forget its pain, and once more with mad fury charged down full tilt upon the Steam Man.

### CHAPTER III. THRILLING ADVENTURES.

THE crisis had come.

Frank knew this, and that it would be either victory for one or the other. If the python should succeed in overturning the wagon, he might do great harm to the delicate machinery of the Steam Man.

But Frank did not intend that this should happen if he could help it. He got one more shot at the reptile as it came on with a fearful rush. Crack!

Once more the deadly elephant rifle spoke. This time an explosive shell tore its way through the snake's side.

Yet it did not inflict a mortal wound.

"Heavens!" gasped Frank. "That snake has more lives than a cat." He essayed to meet the reptile as he had done before.

But the wily monster, this time evaded the Steam Man and made for the wagon.

There was no such thing as turning aside that fearful attack.

Like an avalanche the snake struck the wagon. Had not the wheels been braced against a heap of stones, it would surely have been swept over upon its side.

But, by the best of good fortune it resisted the shock.

Like a flash the snake's coils went twining about the wagon. They began to draw powerfully, and the metal work began to groan and crack.

"Quick, boys!" shouted Frank Reade, Jr. "Cut the folds in two wherever you can."

But Barney and Pomp needed no bidding. They already had their knives unsheathed, and where the snake's body was exposed at the loopholes began to slash and cut.

Frank with his rifle tried to get a shot at the reptile's head.

If he could only blow it off with one of the shells, the battle would be ended.

But the monster did not give him this opportunity.

Something desperate needed to be done. The metal work of the wagon threatened to give way.

Frank saw this and at once with his accustomed hardihood accepted a desperate chance.

Throwing open the door of the wagon, he sprang out.

The reptile's head was above the wagon, and Frank instantly fired at it.

He was a dead shot and, undoubtedly, would have hit it, had it not been for the snake's gyratory motion.

The reptile's attention was instantly attracted toward Frank.

Singularly enough, its folds relaxed and it slid away from the wagon and started for the young inventor.

The snake was between Frank and the cage door.

He knew that if those deadly folds were to close about him, there would be little likelihood of ever escaping alive.

The snake had acted with the rapidity of thought.

Frank had not even time to thrust another cartridge into the breech of his gun.

He started to run. For a few paces he made good time, but what is there on earth to equal the speed of an active python.

Swift as the wind the monster was upon him.

Frank felt its hot breath, and saw for a moment its glistening jaws open over him.

Instinctively he threw up one hand, and by chance his fingers clutched the monster's throat.

Frank hung to this hold with a death-like grip. He felt the mighty coils closing about him, and then with the desperation of one facing certain death he clutched the hilt of his knife with his free hand.

With all his strength he slashed at the monster's throat.

The first blow half severed the head from the body.

A huge jet of black blood spurted into Frank's face and nigh choked him. But though half suffocated he made another blow.

The snake's folds began to loosen, and the monster writhed and tried to free itself.

Frank instantly realized that he had won the victory and fought more coolly now.

Once more he made a blow at the snake's neck.

This time it severed the head from the body completely.

The body of the snake went twisting and writhing a hundred yards across the plain, while Frank fell half fainting to the ground.

Barney and Pomp were quickly by his side and the Celt cried:

"Be me sowl, Misther Frank, I did think yez wor done for, an' it was a good foight yez made to be shure. Are yez badly hurted?"

"Not a bit, Barney," said Frank, staggering to his feet. "It was only a little faintness, that was all."

Pomp turned a hand spring.

"Glory fo' goodness!" cried the overjoyed darky. "I'se jes' dat glad, Marse Frank, dat I don' jes' know what fo' to do dat yo' was not hurt."

The snake's body now lay writhing and twisting far out on the plain.

The adventurers did not go near it. They had had snake experience enough for one day and returned to the Steam Man.

"The next time you see a big snake, Barney," said Frank, "if he is not disturbing us I think you had better let him alone."

The Steam Man now once more went on its way.

Every day now they penetrated deeper into the jungles and wild fastnesses of this wildest country on the globe.

Many strange sights were seen and some thrilling experiences were encountered.

With difficulty the Steam Man found passage through the lowlands.

At times it was necessary to cut a path through a dense forest in order to reach clear country beyond.

But one day they came out of a deep wood at the very base of a mighty, volcanic mountain.

Here higher ground was reached and a broad view enjoyed.

And from here a view could be had of a part of the broad table-lands of Tanada.

It began to look as if the explorers would soon reach the end of their journey.

Now the table-lands were reached the next thing was to discover the ruined city of Mazendla.

Thus far, our adventurers had seen very few natives, and none of them hostile.

The Steam Man journeyed all that day upon the broad table land of Tanada.

As night was coming on, a location was selected for a camping place.

It was a green spot close to a bubbling spring of water.

Not more than one hundred yards distant was a dense grove of trees.

Barney and Pomp were busy aboard the Steam Man preparing the evening meal.

Frank fancied that through the dense foliage of the trees he could discern the white walls of a building.

Barney and Pomp could not see it, but Frank was sure that he could. The famous inventor exclaimed:

"I am not sure but that we are in the neighborhood of the ruined city of Mazendla. It may be that yonder grove of trees conceals it."

"Begorra, Misther Frank, maybe yez are roight," declared Barney, "but be Mither Murphy's pigs, I can't see that same with me own eyes!"

"Can't you? Look sharply now to the left."

Barney strained his vision.

"Devil a bit av it."

"That is queer."

"Bejabers, I think so."

"Pomp, how is your eyesight?"

"Golly, Marse Frank, dis chile kin see in de dark."

"Well, just take a look over there and tell me what you see through those trees."

Pomp readily obeyed.

But he could see nothing but the dense green foliage.

"Bejabers, the naygur can't see it if I can't," spluttered Barney.

Pomp scratched his woolly head.

"I mus' say, Marse Frank, dat I kain't see none ob dat what yo' says."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Frank, testily. "Neither one of you have good eyesight. It is plain enough to see."

With this, the famous inventor descended from the wagon.

Barney and Pomp stood looking at each other and feeling a bit crestfallen.

"Begorra, I can see it if yez kin, naygur," exclaimed Barney.

"G'long, yo' fool Pishman. I has'n seen it m'self yet."

"You fellows look out for things until I come back," shouted Frank, starting toward the forest.

Barney grabbed up his rifle.

"Hould on a bit, Misther Frank," he cried. "It ain't a bit safe fer yez to go of out there alone."

"Jes' yo' wait dar, I'ish, I'se gwine wid Marse Frank m'self."

"No, yez won't."

"Yo' jes' bet I will."

The two zealous servitors were in imminent danger of a collision. But Frank turned and said peremptorily:

"Hold where you are. I am going alone. Look out for the Man until I get back."

This settled the question.

Reluctantly they turned back, and Pomp went about his cooking duties, while Barney gazed wistfully after Frank and declared:

"Be me sowl, it ain't safe for that man to go out there alone. I'll just kape me eye out all the same."

So Barney proceeded to keep an eye out, while Pomp was busy at his work.

Reaching the woods, Frank entered them without hesitation.

He was confident that he had really seen the walls of a ruined building through the thick foliage.

To his best belief it was some part of the ruined city they were in quest of.

But upon entering the forest, Frank found that progress was not so easy as he fancied.

The vines and matted shrubbery were almost impenetrable.

The famous inventor, however, used a small hatchet, and proceeded to cut his way through.

In this manner he had very soon cleared quite a path.

But suddenly he was brought to a halt in a most startling manner.

Down through a network of vines he suddenly saw a glistening pair of eyeballs.

To his startled fancy they seemed veritable balls of fire, and for a moment he could not act.

They were fixed upon him with piercing and deadly earnestness.

Frank instinctively knew that they belonged to some wild animal.

Just what kind of a creature it was he could not at the moment tell.

But he was satisfied that his position was one of deadly peril.

But he was not one given to fear or hesitation. His mind was quickly made up as to what to do.

Quick as thought he brought his rifle up and fired point blank directly between the blazing eyeballs.

The result was terrific.

Frank had presence of mind enough to sink down upon his face just as a tremendous tawny body rose out of the shrubbery and sprang directly over him.

It was as he saw at that moment a monstrous puma or panther, called by the natives lion.

Indeed, the genuine lion is not a more formidable beast to encounter than the puma of Central America.

It was a narrow escape that Frank had had.

The puma had sprung clear over him and tumbled headlong into a heap of brush, where he began to flounder and make the air hideous with his cries.

Frank was not sure whether he had given the beast a mortal wound or not.

Nor did he try to find out or follow up the contest.

He knew well enough what a hand to hand encounter with one of these monsters meant.

He at once sprang out of the forest and started at full speed for the Steam Man.

But what was his horror upon looking over his shoulder to see the lion coming after him.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE TEMPLE IN THE WOODS.

The sensation experienced by Frank Reade, Jr., at that moment, was a most sickening and horrible one.

He knew that it would be easy for the puma to overtake him.

To be overtaken meant death.

But still he ran with terrific speed across the plain. The panther was close upon him, however.

But, just as it began to look bad for Frank, a cry came from the Steam Man.

Barney had been upon the watch.

He had heard the shot in the woods, and knew at once that Frank was in trouble.

He shouted to Pomp:

"Come up quick, naygur. Bejabers, the master's in a heap av thruble. I just heerd his rifle go off yender in the woods."

"Golly!" gasped Pomp, as he dropped his frying pan. "What's dat yo' say, I'ish?"

Barney seized the throttle rein and started the Steam Man toward the woods.

It was just at the moment when Frank emerged with the lion after him.

The lion was gaining with tremendous bounds upon Frank.

But Barney set the Steam Man after him with all speed. A terrific race followed.

Pomp was at a loophole with his rifle.

Drawing a bead on the animal, he fired. Barney lashed the throttle rein and did the same.

Both shots took effect.

But they did not stay the panther's course, though they drew a howl of pain from him.

But every moment increased Frank's danger. He seemed certain to be overtaken.

"Be me sowl!" groaned Barney, in horror, "I belave the devil will overtake Misther Frank. How many lives has the baste got, anyway?"

But at that moment Barney hit upon a happy idea.

By the best of good fortune Frank's elephant rifle lay upon one of the seats.

It contained an explosive shell and was a weapon very deadly in its effects.

It did not take Barney long to make use of it.

Seizing the rifle, he sprang to a loophole. The Steam Man had gained, and was but twenty yards from the panther.

But the beast was within ten feet of Frank Reade, Jr.

Just as he made a long leap to overtake his victim Barney fired.

If ever there was a time in his life that the Celt needed nerve and accuracy of aim it was then.

And straight to the mark sped the bullet.

The explosive shell struck the panther full behind the shoulder.

It tore its way through the beast's heart and lungs. Death was instantaneous.

But the beast's body struck Frank and hurled him upon his face.

And there the famous inventor lay with the panther's form upon him, with the hot blood surging over him in a stream.

Barney closed the throttle, applied the brakes, and brought the Steam Man to a halt.

Then the two faithful servitors rushed out of the cage and to Frank's side.

But the young inventor was unhurt, and scrambled quickly to his feet as soon as the panther's body was pulled off from him.

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney, in delight and triumph. "We've saved yez, Misther Frank, an' if we hadn't yez would shurely 'ay' been kilt entorely."

"Yes, I think I should," agreed Frank. "And I owe my life to you both. I shall not forget it."

The puma was the largest of his kind that our adventurers had ever seen.

It was at the time of year that his skin was worthless, being mangy, so that it was not preserved.

Frank was quite overcome with his experience, and went on board the wagon to rest.

As darkness was at hand, it was decided to make no further exploration of the forest until morning.

Frank was more than ever convinced, however, that there were ruins in the forest.

"To-morrow we will cut our way through," he declared, "and I will satisfy you, my friends, that I am right."

"A'right, Marse Frank," agreed Pomp. "We're open to conviction jus' de same."

"Bejabers, that's right!" put in Barney.

It was seldom deemed safe to sleep outside the wagon.

So beds were made comfortably enough on the seats which ran along the sides.

Here our adventurers could sleep quite soundly. Barney and Pomp were soon in the land of dreams.

But Frank Reade, Jr., could not successfully woo the gentle goddess.

Suddenly, as he lay there in a reverie, a sudden curious manifestation caused him to start up.

A ray of something, a trifle brighter than the moonlight, glinted its radiance athwart the wire netting.

For an instant Frank was puzzled.

He rose to a sitting posture and glanced out upon the level plain.

All was plain in the moonlight out there. But no sign of life was to be seen.

Then Frank turned his gaze toward the forest, and there he caught the vivid glimmer of a light.

Certainly it was not moonlight glinting on any bright substance, but such a vivid radiance as could only be made by firelight.

Either a torch or lantern it was, and its motion and changing of base suggested that it was carried by human hands.

Frank was deeply interested.

"I knew it!" he muttered. "I'll wager my life that there is a building in that forest, but I did not dream that it was inhabited."

He watched the light intently.

It moved back and forward, and was of such size as to dispel the theory of the will-o'-the-wisp or ignis fatuus.

Once from the distance Frank fancied he heard a distant outcry.

But this he could not place reliance upon, as it might have been made by some wild beast.

But of one thing he was satisfied.

There was certainly human life and habitation in the forest. On the morrow he would learn what it meant.

He was hardly able to restrain a strong desire to go alone upon an exploring tour under cover of the night.

But sober reflection persuaded him not to do this.

It would be neither safe nor right. So Frank controlled his desire until daybreak came.

The young inventor had not slept that night.

At an early hour he aroused Barney and Pomp.

He did not tell them about the mysterious light, but bluntly informed them that he meant to invade the forest that morning.

"A'right, Marse Frank," agreed Pomp. "Yo' wo'd am law."

"Bejabers, that's so," cried Barney.

Accordingly Frank laid out his map of procedure.

First the Man skirted the edge of the grove looking for an entrance. Failing to find this the adventurers would cut their way through the dense undergrowth.

But luckily a passage was found.

To Frank's gratification and the surprise of Barney and Pomp, a broad paved roadway was discovered.

Flat slabs of stone composed the roadway. This was much overgrown with weeds and brush, but did not materially impede the progress of the Steam Man.

Beneath mighty overhanging trees the roadway extended for half a mile.

Then it suddenly brought the explorers out upon a wonderful scene. Cries of surprise and admiration escaped the lips of Barney and Pomp.

"Golly, Marse Frank, yo' was right aftah all."

"Bejabers, that's so."

Frank was intently engaged in studying the scene spread before him.

He saw a strange looking building of whitest marble and mighty dimensions before him.

About the building were acres of paved courts and walls, with open gateways and overgrown with all manner of vines and vari-colored vegetation.

The building occupied a space of over an acre, and in style of architecture was not unlike some of the better class of pueblos in Mexico.

But there were richly carved balconies and hanging gardens, piazzas and porticoes, and all done in the whitest of marble.

What was stranger yet, the building did not seem to be a ruin but newly constructed and indeed not altogether finished.

There was evidence that the workmen had not been absent many hours.

Beds of fresh mortar were in the court-yard, slabs of newly cut marble were strewn about.

As the Steam Man entered the court-yard, Frank noticed this and looked for the appearance of any number of workmen.

But to his surprise they did not appear. To all appearance the temple or pueblo in the deep forest was deserted.

For some time our adventurers continued to gaze upon the wonderful building with curiosity and interest.

"Bejabers, I don't see whativat they'd want for to build sich a foine house in this place for," exclaimed Barney. "I don't understand it at all, at all."

"I jes' finks dat dis am a new race ob people dat we hab discovered, Marse Frank," suggested Pomp.

"We can tell very quickly when some of them show up," replied Frank.

"I wondah if dey am hostile to de white people, or to civilized people," asked Pomp.

"Indeed!" replied Frank, "there is every indication that these people are civilized. I wish some of them would show up."

After an hour of patient waiting, Barney suggested that they take the liberty of exploring the place.

"I reckon that's the best way out av it," recommended the Celt.

"An' mebbe we can foind some av the gintlemen."

"It is possible," said Frank.

"P'raps they're as good Americans as oursilves now," rejoined Barney.

"No," dissented Frank. "No American would build this kind of a house."

"Whativat koind of people do yez think they are, Misther Frank?"

"Well," replied the young inventor, slowly, "it is my opinion that we have made a discovery valuable to science and the world."

"Indeed it is not extravagant to assume that these people are a remnant of the original inhabitants of Yucatan who built the famous cities of Palenque and Mazendla.

"If so, then I shall have the greatest curiosity to see them."

"I'se a heap 'raid we won't see 'em to-day, Marse Frank," said Pomp.

Another hour passed slowly.

Still the mysterious workmen did not return.

At the expiration of this time Frank decided to take a look about the premises.

The Steam Man was left carefully adjusted, and the three adventurers set out across the court-yard.

Of course they were heavily armed and did not intend to go out of sight of the Steam Man.

In crossing the court-yard they came upon a wonderful bit of work.

This was a square-shaped basin cut in whitest marble, and occupied by a bubbling spring with water as pure and clear as crystal.

In this water were fish of a peculiar green and vivid blue color, of the gold fish species evidently.

It was certainly a beautiful spectacle.

Pomp tasted of the water.

It was as pure and cool as could well be desired, and far superior to the water usually found in that part of Central America.

Passing by this they entered the main hall of the pueblo, if such it could be called.

It was a massive chamber, high roofed, with polished columns.

It was a perfect wonder to the explorers, who could not conceal their amazement.

But at one end of the hall was a strange polished dais.

Towards this Barney made his way. It seemed made of some peculiar kind of beautiful stone like agate.

Barney sprang upon it.

"Bejabers!" he cried, "av this ain't the place phwere they'll set their idol. If iver—"

He did not finish his speech. In a twinkling a thrilling thing happened. The polished stone owing to some mysterious and inexplicable agency, turned and Barney vanished like a flash.

## CHAPTER V.

### BATTLE WITH THE PYGMIES.

No sooner had Barney mounted the polished dais, than with a swift movement it turned and he vanished into a black aperture beneath.

He went out of sight so suddenly that nothing could have been done to prevent or save him.

For a moment Frank Reade, Jr., and Pomp stood aghast gazing at the treacherous slab of stone.

"Great heavens!" gasped Frank. "What does it mean? Barney! Where are you? Answer if you can."

A long wail went up from Pomp's lips.

"Lor'sakes, Marse Frank, he am gwine gone to his death. Dat big stone hab jes' crushed him to death fo' suah."

"It can't be—it must not be so!" cried Frank, with horror, and half insane, he was about to spring upon the stone himself, when Pomp pulled him back.

"Fo' goodness, Marse Frank, don' yo' go an' do dat same fng?" cried the affrighted darky. "Yo' will follow Barney, an' den what-eber dis chile dr?"

"But we must know Barney's fate!" cried Frank, desperately.

Again and again he called the name of his faithful servitor.

But no answer came back.

All was the silence of the tomb.

Bathed in cold perspiration, Frank laid his hands upon the stone and essayed to move it.

But he could not do this.

What other resort he would have tried, it is impossible to say, but at that moment a warning cry broke from Pomp's lips.

"Fo' Hebbin's sake, Marse Frank, jes' yo' look yender. I done fink we bettah skip fo' de Steam Man."

Frank glanced in the direction indicated.

Through the arches of the temple he saw the court-yard beyond.

Through this, three huge tigers were coming at full speed.

There was not a moment to lose.

In their exposed position Frank had no hopes of overconing three such savage brutes.

Accordingly the safest method to pursue was to fly to the Steam Man.

Without further hesitation and with one impulse, Frank and Pomp started.

They sped through the court like a flash. One of the tigers let out a tremendous savage roar.

All of the savage beasts were in hot pursuit of the two men.

Fortunately they had not far to go. Frank reached the wagon first and sprang in.

Pomp followed, and they had just time to shut the door in the cage, when the foremost of the tigers came bounding against it.

One of the tigers sprang on the top of the cage and crouched there, trying to claw his way through the netting.

The others kept leaping against the side of the wagon ferociously.

Pomp had sprung for a rifle, and would have fired at the brutes.

But a strange incident prevented.

Suddenly the notes of a strange sounding horn sounded through the arches of the temple.

Instantly the three tigers leaped down and went skulking away across the court-yard.

Pomp and Frank were so completely amazed that they were for a moment speechless and inactive.

"Fo' massy's sake!" gasped Pomp, in utter amazement. "What-ebber am de meanin' ob dat?"

"Why, it looks as if they were trained tigers," replied Frank, a swift comprehension breaking over him. "Ah, I was right—there is their master."

Both saw, standing upon an angle of the court-yard wall, an individual, the like of which neither had ever seen before.

He was almost a pigmy in stature, but thickset and stout of frame.

His complexion was the color of parchment, and his hair long,

black and wiry, hung down over his shoulders.

His keen eyes looking furtively out from beneath heavy eyebrows were fixed keenly upon the Steam Man.

He was dressed in a curious-looking suit of some sort of queerly-woven cloth, a compromise between the garb of a Turk and a native Mexican.

In his hand he carried a long lance steel tipped.

For a full minute he stood gazing at the Steam Man.

"Golly, Marse Frank," muttered Pomp. "Dat am de funniest-looking little man I eber seed."

"Well, you're right, Pomp," agreed Frank, regarding the other with interest. "If he is a specimen of the aborigines of this country they were a funny looking lot of people."

But the funny looking little man leaped down from his perch and now advanced toward the Steam Man, gesticulating and talking in some strange tongue.

Frank could not understand a word he said.

The famous inventor opened the door of the cage and stepped down into the court-yard.

At this the aborigine came to a halt not ten paces distant.

He spoke to Frank in a strange tongue.

Frank did not attempt to make it out, but replied:

"I cannot talk your language, sir."

Again the little man spoke. Frank repeated his declaration.

The pigmy gesticulated furiously and swung his lance threateningly. But Frank tried to pacify him by resorting to signs.

This had some little effect.

The pigmy understood partly the signs Frank made.

The young inventor pointed to the Steam Man and talked and gesticulated. The pigmy's confidence seemed to be gained and he approached nearer.

"Now, Pomp," said Frank, "start the Man up a little."

Pomp pulled the throttle rein.

The Steam Man gave a puff and began to move ahead.

The effect upon the pigmy was rather startling. He dropped his lance and stood for a moment trembling in abject terror.

Then wheeling, with several cat-like leaps he gained the edge of the parapet and went over it.

Frank rushed to the wall and looked over.

But the pigmy had gone.

He was nowhere to be seen.

Frank now began to fathom the mystery of the place. These strange people had methods of living vastly at variance with American ideas.

None of them were visible just now.

He had read of a class of people in Africa who never showed themselves above ground in daylight.

All of their work was done at night, and during the daytime they burrowed caverns in the ground and slept.

These people of the marble pueblo might be much the same. Frank began to believe that this was the way of it.

The light which he had seen the night before was no doubt used by the workmen in laying the stone and mortar for the structure.

But where did they find hiding places during the day?

Were there chambers or caverns underneath the marble pueblo?

Certainly the pigmy could not have disappeared so easily if there was not some method of hiding in some such manner.

Frank vaulted the parapet and began to examine the stone walls.

After some moments' search to his surprise, as he touched one of the stones, it swung inward.

A long, narrow passage dark as Erebus was disclosed.

The mystery was solved at last.

This no doubt led to underground chambers where the pigmies spent their days.

And now Frank believed that he had solved the mystery of Barney's fate.

The Celt had no doubt fallen through one of the mysterious entrances into the underground abode of the pigmies.

The marble dais in the temple was then, after all, but a curious sort of entrance to the underground retreat.

By leaping upon it, one was quickly carried down to the depths below.

It had required something more than ordinary ingenuity to invent this clever door of stone so nicely balanced.

Certainly these remnants of a lost and almost extinct race were certainly far from being fools.

They were beyond doubt most clever and skillful mechanics, masons and artisans.

Frank was tempted to invade the underground retreat of the pigmies, but sober second thought forbade.

Again at this moment a warning cry came from Pomp, who was aboard the Steam Man.

"Come, quick, Marse Frank, fo' yo' life!" shouted Pomp.

Frank lost no time in complying.

And, as he leaped over the wall, he saw the cause of Pomp's alarm. The court-yard was suddenly filling with a seeming legion of the pigmies.

They were all armed as well, and were inclined to a warlike attitude. Three tigers were now held in leash.

Frank saw the first little man in the front rank.

He seemed to be the leader of the band. Fully three hundred of the pigmies had suddenly appeared.

It was a most astonishing complication to Frank Reade, Jr.

The pigmies were all armed with long lances and bore down toward the Steam Man.

Frank pulled the whistle valve and let out an ear-splitting shriek.

For a moment the pigmies appeared to be literally paralyzed.

They were thrown into the wildest confusion. Terror seemed to be predominant, until the little old man ran in front of them and exhorted them.

His words seemed to act like magic upon them.

They re-formed and once more the outlook became serious.

With bristling lances they once more advanced toward the Steam Man.

There was no evading the issue now.

Frank saw this at a glance.

He was averse to killing any of the strange people unless compelled to.

Discretion seemed the better part of valor, and it appeared in order to retreat in as graceful a manner as possible.

Accordingly he started the Steam Man across the court-yard. With clanking tread the Man crossed the space.

This brought him out upon the roadway. The pigmies pursued hurling their lances at the cage.

But the steel netting was proof against them, and they fell off harmlessly.

However, Frank saw that they were planning to annihilate the Steam Man with a huge log thrown across the roadway by a party who had headed the Man off.

The tree would prevent the Man's progress in that direction, and Frank set his lips grimly.

"They are after our lives, Pomp. I hate to fire into them, but it is self-defense."

"Oh co'se it am, Marse Frank," protested Pomp. "You'e jes' a good right to shoot ebry one ob dem, fo' suah."

Frank picked up his rifle.

The foe were swarming down upon the Steam Man.

They evidently believed that they had their mysterious visitor cornered. Loud cries of triumph pealed from their lips.

But Frank opened fire with his Winchester repeater.

Crack—ack—ack!

The shots flew swift and true. One, two, three of the foe fell. Then Pomp joined in the battle.

Crack!

Another of the pigmies fell. This had the effect of partially checking them.

Frank started the Steam Man forward. The huge log across the road barred their progress, but a few shots from the Winchesters scattered the foe there assembled.

Then Pomp sprang down and moved the log.

It required all the darky's strength, but he succeeded and then returned to the wagon.

"Golly, Marse Frank!" cried the excited darky, "I reckon we'se jes' gib dem rascals a bit ob a lesson."

"I think we have, Pomp," agreed Frank, "but I fear we've not seen the last of this battle yet."

The young inventor's fears were not without foundation.

The pygmies had been for a few moments repulsed by the deadly fire of the repeating rifles.

But they had by no means given up the idea of capturing the Steam Man.

A large party of them had struck out into the forest, and now, as Frank started the Steam Man for the table-land beyond, he was again quickly brought to a halt by a new development.

Turning a bend in the road unexpectedly, he saw just ahead a large gang of the pygmies congregated there.

They had felled several tall palms, and they lay across the roadway effectually blocking the passage of the Steam Man.

Affairs had certainly reached a crisis.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BARNEY MEETS A FRIEND.

But what of Barney, whom we have seen disappear in such a mysterious manner beneath the stone dais?

The astounded Celt felt the stone give way beneath him, but before he had time to recover himself it had turned completely over, and he felt himself descending through space and darkness.

He struck upon his back upon some soft substance.

How far he had dropped he had no means of knowing.

All was darkness about him. He was quickly upon his feet, and began to feel about him.

The substance he had fallen upon he discovered by touch was a pile of some sort of soft cloth-covered cushions. The Celt was more than surprised.

"Begorra, wherever am I at all, at all?" he spluttered. "Phwat sort av a place is this, I'd loike to know?"

This was a question not easily answered owing to the dense gloom which enshrouded it.

As soon as he could collect his scattered senses Barney got upon his feet and strove to pierce the gloom about him.

Fortunately he had a small taper in his pocket.

This he lit and its light dispelled the gloom about him.

Then he saw that he was in a square chamber of stone.

He was standing upon a pile of soft cushions. Above him he could see nothing but stone, just the same as the walls about.

But leading out of this curious chamber was a narrow passage-way.

Barney started towards it, but at this moment his taper went out.

The Celt muttered something not very polite and was about to light it again, when he heard a creaking sound above, and two dark forms came hurtling down through the gloom and struck the cushions near him.

Barney's eyes had become partly accustomed to the dim light, and a momentary flash of daylight as the stone above turned showed him the personnel of the intruders.

At first he had instinctively fancied them his companions Frank and Pomp.

But second thought taught him better judgment. Instinctively he shrank back against the wall.

The two new-comers with exclamations in a peculiar tongue quickly picked themselves up.

Before Barney could fully recover from his amazement they had gone.

"Bejabers, I see it all now," muttered the enlightened Irishman, "this is only a quare sort av a dure by which the omadowns enther their undherground abode. Well, now, that's quite clever, but howver am I to git back agin with Misther Frank an' ther naygur?"

This was, indeed, a problem.

Barney again lit his taper and looked in vain for some method by which he might climb out of the place.

This was impossible.

There seemed but one way, and this was to follow the passage which the new-comers had just taken.

Barney made no doubt that they were of the strange people who had built the temple, but he was not by any means assured that they would be especially friendly to invaders like himself.

"Bejabers, it's well to first git acquainted with the nature av the baste," he muttered, "an' thin av it's all right go ahead."

This was certainly sound logic, and it was well for Barney that he adopted it.

The strange people would not have received him cordially, and indeed his precaution may be said to have been the saving of his life.

But there seemed no other safe method of procedure but to attempt the passage.

Accordingly Barney entered it.

He kept on in the darkness cautiously for a short distance.

Then he saw a ray of light ahead.

Also from the distance there came the murmur of many voices.

Barney kept on with increased caution now.

Very soon he saw that the passage would bring him into a mighty illumined chamber under the temple.

Oil lamps of various grotesque shapes furnished the means of light, and a dense throng of the most curious looking people he had ever seen were present.

Barney gazed upon the scene with great interest.

"Be me sowl, but ain't they bits av men," he muttered. "No wan av them is bigger nor a good sized Irish lad."

The pygmy women dressed much the same as the men, and seemed to busy themselves in various quarters at the culinary art.

Some time Barney spent in watching the curious people.

The next moment he received the greatest surprise of his life.

"For Heaven's sake!" said a voice at his elbow. "Is it possible there is a person in this place who can speak English too?"

Barney turned like a flash.

"Tare an' 'ounds!" he gasped. "Who the devil are yez?"

"On the other hand, let me ask the same question."

Barney was facing a young man, tall, straight and handsome.

He was dressed in the garb of a native hunter, and carried a rifle. A moment previous he had crept out of a niche in the wall just to Barney's right.

The two white men stood gazing at each other in amazement.

"Well, I niver!" gasped Barney. "Yez are not one of these haythins that own this place, are yez?"

"No. Are you?"

"Devil a bit."

"Who are you?"

"Me name is Barney O'Shea, and I'm a respectable Irish gentleman."

"Good! Give me your hand. I am an American, and the Irishman has no better friend."

"Yez talk like a man, yez do," cried Barney. "I'm delighted to meet yez. But howver did yez come here?"

"Well," replied the young man, "I was fool enough to step upon a revolving dais in the temple above, and——"

"Bejabers. I came here that same way mesilf," cried Barney.

"So? Well, we are in for it."

"Yez are roight."

"But what may I ask has brought you into this part of Yucatan?"

"Shure, I come here wid the Steam Man, an' Misther Frank Reade, Jr., the worruld-famous invintor."

A gurgling cry escaped the other's lips.

"Frank Reade, Jr.?" he gasped. "Do you mean to say that he is near here?"

"Well, I lift him when I fell down into this place."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the young man, excitedly. "Why, Frank Reade, Jr., is an old friend of mine. I must see him. Look here, what brought him here?"

"Shure, he's lookin' for a young man named Tony Buckden who got lost down in this haythian region."

"Well, is this not luck? Look here, man, I am Tony Buckden——"

Barney threw up his arms.

"The devil yez say?" he exploded, in a hoarse whisper. "Shure, I'd ought to have guessed that, an' Mr. Frank will be deloighted to see yez."

"And I shall be delighted to see him!" cried the millionaire's son, for such he was. "So he answered my letter in person?"

"Yis."

"And he has the Steam Man here?"

"Shure enough."

"Then the success of my plans are assured!" exclaimed Tony, jubilantly. "That is, if we succeed in escapin' from here."

"Shure we must do that," declared Barney, confidently.

At this moment there arose a great commotion among the pygmy people.

Excited cries arose, and us with one accord they rushed from the place. In less than no time the place was cleared.

Tony Buckden and Barney were not a little surprised.

"I wonder what that means?" exclaimed the New Yorker.

"Bejabers, there's no tellin' but that they've heard of the Steam Man and that's phwat has drawn them away."

"By Jove, I don't know but that you are right, Barney," declared Buckden. "At any rate, it looks to me like a very good opportunity to escape."

"Shure, it's a foine chance."

Not one of the pygmy people were left in the place.

Of course Barney and young Buckden did not hesitate a moment to avail themselves of the opportunity.

Buckden led the way and they crossed the broad chamber and came to a passage which seemed to lead upwards.

There were stairs cut in the stone, and up these the two imprisoned men sprung.

A moment later they came out into the main body of the temple. Now they could hear the crack of fire-arms and the yells of the pygmy people.

It was at the moment when the Steam Man was about to leave the court-yard and had been attacked by the natives, if such they could be called.

Both Buckden and Barney could see the heads of the contestants beyond a wall of stone.

It was their impulse to go to the aid of Frank and Pomp.

But this was seen at once to be clearly impossible.

They could not hope to successfully fight their way through the crowd of people. Moreover, a thrilling danger now confronted the fugitives.

The three trained tigers from whom Frank and Pomp had so narrowly escaped were gamboling in the court-yard.

If they should chance to catch sight of young Buckden and Barney the result would not be pleasant for them.

Clearly the safest way for the two adventurers was to steal out of the place and gain the forest beyond.

Then they might trust to luck in rejoining the Steam Man. Certainly it was the best method to pursue.

This Buckden at once proceeded to do. He led the way boldly across the court-yard and to a wall at its extremity.

Fortune favored them, and they reached the wall in safety.

Vaulting it, they dashed into the forest.

Once among the thick undergrowth they were safe, at least for the time.

"Whew!" exclaimed Buckden, suddenly pausing and wiping the perspiration from his face. "We did that in fine shape, did we not, Barney?"

"To be shure, sor," replied the Celt with a chuckle.

"Now what shall we do?"

"Shure, I think we had betther thry and foind the Stheam Man," said Barney.

"Of course, but how shall we proceed to do that?"

"Well, bejabbers, I think the best way is to make a cut through the woods here and thrust to good fortune to foind Misther Frank out on the open ground. I'm thinkin' he'll 'ave to return there affer lavin' this place, for shure."

"All right," agreed Buckden. "Fortunately I know a path that will lead directly there. In fact, I came here by it."

"That's good luck!" cried Barney, joyfully. "It's dyin' I am to get back to the Stheam Man once more."

"Well, we will try it hard!" declared Buckden, leading the way. "Come on, Barney."

They set out through the forest without further comment.

Buckden found little difficulty in finding the path by which he had entered the place.

Along this they sped swiftly. Soon the foliage began to grow thinner and straggling rays of light ahead showed that they were approaching the verge.

A few moments later they emerged entirely from the forest and came out upon the vast table-land.

As far as the eye could reach extended the level expanse.

Barney and his companion swept the plain eagerly with their eyes for some trace of the Steam Man.

Barney felt confident that the Man would return to the open plain. Therefore it was with a glad cry that he suddenly pointed down the line of forest.

"Luk!" he cried. "Wud yez see the loikes av that! Be me sowl, we're in luck, for it's the Stheam Man."

Sure enough, coming along the edge of the forest at a rapid speed was the famous Steam Man.

Frank Reade, Jr., was at the throttle, and when he saw Barney waving his arms he pulled the whistle valve open and sent up a shriek of welcome.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE WONDERFUL CITY.

THAT the Steam Man had escaped from the attack of the pygmies, this would make certain.

Straight for the barrier erected by the foe Frank sent the Man.

When twenty yards from it, he closed the throttle and applied the brake.

"Now, Pompy!" he cried, "it's a fight for life."

"Yo' kin jes' bet on dat, Marse Frank," cried the plucky darky.

"We must not waste a shot."

"Not a one, Marse Frank."

At the loopholes the two adventurers stationed themselves, and opened fire upon the foe.

The pygmies hurled their lances at the cage.

But they were shattered against the steel netting and did no harm at all.

On the other hand, the repeaters did deadly work.

No human power could face such a destructive fire. The pygmies were driven from the barricade.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., kept them at a distance, while Pomp dismounted and set about clearing a pathway for the Man.

This was not a very easy job, but Pomp finally succeeded and the Steam Man passed through the barrier.

A few shots were sent after the pygmies, and then the Man under Frank's skillful guidance set out for the plain.

It was not long before the Steam Man was out of the forest.

Once out upon the open plain, Frank set his course along the edge of the forest.

Suddenly Pomp sprang up with a sharp cry:

"Golly sakes, Marse Frank, dar am dat I'ishman alibe an' well as I'm a nigger. Jes' look dar."

"Barney!" gasped Frank.

"Dat am a fac'."

"Thank Heaven."

Frank gazed in the direction indicated by Pomp, and saw Barney waving his arms frantically in the air.

At once Frank pulled the whistle valve and increased the Steam Man's speed.

A few moments later the Steam Man came to a halt upon the spot where Barney had stood.

The meeting was a joyous one. Barney and Pomp embraced, and Frank gripped Buckden's hand.

"Tony, I'm awful glad to see you," he declared. "I feared you were dead. They assured me at Campeachy that you would never be found alive."

"Well, they didn't know anything about it," declared Tony, sententiously; "then you got my letter?"

"Yes."

"And you have answered it in person. Just like you."

"Look here, Tony," said Frank, seriously; "I was sent here by your father to look you up and bring you home."

"Humph!" exclaimed Tony, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"That is the truth."

"Well, I'm not ready to go home yet."

"You are not?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I propose to find the ruined city and its treasure first. I thought that you had come here to help me."

"Do you believe it exists?"

"Of course I do."

"Near here?"

"Why, I believe that we are not ten miles from it."

"But if it is inhabited with people like these with whom we have just had a little experience——"

"But it is not. It is a ruined and deserted city. Come, Frank, with your Steam Man we can find it. You must agree to go."

Frank was silent a moment.

Now that he had accomplished the real object of his mission—the rescue of Tony Buckden—he was quite willing to turn about and go home.

But he knew Tony well enough to be sure that he was very much in earnest.

He would not leave his purpose unaccomplished, even though it cost him his life.

There was no doubt but that with the Steam Man the country could be safely explored.

Frank was a trifle skeptical now as to the real existence of Mazendia.

But he reasoned that it would do no great harm to give at least another week to exploration.

In that time, no doubt, Tony would be satisfied, and then of course would willingly return.

So Frank extended his hand.

"All right, Tony," he declared, "I am with you."

"Good for you, old pard!" cried Buckden, joyfully. "I knew you would do it. Now for Mazendia."

"But I must say I have no idea of the location of the city."

"But I do."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"I learned it from a native."

"Ah!"

"Go due east across this table-land. When a tall, sugar-loaf shaped mountain is directly ahead of you, bear to the right and enter a canyon. It will take you directly to Mazendia, the most wonderful of cities."

"All right," cried Frank. "We will follow your directions. All aboard, everybody!"

All scrambled into the cage, and Frank set the Steam Man in motion.

The temple in the forest and the strange race of pygmies were left behind. Nothing more was seen of them.

The Steam Man rapidly crossed the plain.

In the course of an hour the distant shadowy peak of a mountain was seen.

It was some while before its shape became sufficiently clear to decide the question as to whether it was the sugar loaf mountain they were in quest of.

But Buckden declared that it was, and that they were on the right track.

So Frank kept the Steam Man going at full speed.

Every moment now they drew nearer the mountain.

"Look!" cried Buckden, suddenly springing up, "there is the canyon. I tell you we are all right."

"Shall we go for the canyon?" asked Frank Reade, Jr.

"Yes."

A short while later the Steam Man was picking his way along through a mighty gorge fully a thousand feet deep.

For hours the travelers toiled through this mighty gorge.

Then suddenly the Steam Man came out on a mighty plateau. And before the explorers was now spread a most wonderful sight. Not one hundred yards distant was the mighty gateway of a city. The towers upon either side rose to a height of fully one hundred feet.

The wall was high, massive and thick. But it was time cracked and tumbling and decayed.

It required but a glance, however, to detect the evidences of former magnificence and grandeur.

"Hurrah!" shouted young Buckden, completely beside himself.

"At last we have found the city of Mazendia."

All was excitement and our explorers could hardly contain themselves.

Frank steered the Steam Man straight for the gateway and passed through it.

Before them stretched the wide street of the city.

It was fully two hundred feet wide. Upon either side rose high buildings and all in a state of decay.

The wide street, which seemed to extend for miles through this mammoth city, was paved with blocks of a species of sandstone.

Between the stones grass had grown up, and in places trees had attained a great height.

Palms grew and flourished upon the roofs of many of the buildings, and everywhere clinging vines bedecked the ruins.

It was a wonderful sight, and one which our adventurers never forgot.

The sight of this wonderful city of ruins awoke many strange thoughts and sentiments in the breasts of all.

The one question occurred to each: What manner of people had built this wonderful city, how many centuries ago, and what had become of them?

How long had it been since the feet of human beings had trod these streets?

It must have been many centuries previous, as the appearance of the buildings would proclaim that they had not been erected in very recent times.

All this must remain a mystery.

One day a powerful race had here flourished, enlightened, civilized, and certainly intellectual.

Now nothing remained of them but a few crumbling palaces.

It was a wonderful thing to ponder upon. Indeed, the more one studied upon it the more befogged one became.

What had carried off this vast nation of people?

Was it a pestilence, or a war of extermination, or had their seed by some strange fate exhausted itself and they become extinct as the dodo or the megatherium, or any other antedeluvian animal?

There was nothing at hand to answer this question, and there seemed no other way but to accept it as a mystery never to be solved.

The Steam Man jogged leisurely along the broad street.

The occupants of the wagon gazed with wonder upon the stupendous piles upon either side.

Suddenly Barney gave an exclamation and picked up his rifle.

From one of the buildings a spotted leopard had leaped.

The pretty creature crouched for a moment in the Steam Man's path, snarling and defiant.

"Begorra, ain't he a beauty?" cried Barney, eulogistically. "Shure, I'm goin' to have the skin of the baste."

So without a moment's hesitation the Celt drew aim and fired.

The leopard gave a quick, sharp yelp of pain, leaped in the air and fell dead.

The bullet had sped true to the mark. Barney was a dead shot.

"Hooray!" cried the excited Irishman. "I flunked him just off. Now av yez plaze, Misther Frank, will yez jist howld an wan minnit?"

Frank could not refuse this request, so he brought the Steam Man to a halt, saying:

"Pshaw! You don't want his skin, Barney. It is of little use."

"Don't I?" exclaimed the Celt. "Yez kin jist bate I do. I'll take it home to me friends in Ameriky, an' tell thim what a foine shot I am."

Barney opened the rear door and leaped out of the cage.

He went directly up to the leopard, and was about to lift the creature upon his shoulders, when a thrilling thing occurred.

Suddenly, from the same building, four more of the savage animals appeared.

They saw Barney, and without further ceremony came for him like a flash.

The Irishman saw his predicament, and knew that he was in deadly peril.

It required but a moment for him to act.

"Whurroo!" he yelled. "I'm a son av a say cook if the woods ain't full av the devils. Luk out there, yez spotted imps. Be off, I say."

Barney fired at the first leopard, and the shot struck the animal's shoulder.

For a moment it wavered and then tumbled in a heap. But the next moment the three leopards left were upon Barney.

The Celt went to the ground like a ten-pin. It began to look as if his fate was surely sealed.

With three of the animals upon him he would speedily have been clawed to death.

But fortunately for him Barney had valuable allies in the three friends aboard the Steam Man.

A startled cry came from Frank's lips as he saw the leopards appear.

He at once snatched up his rifle.

"Heavens!" he cried. "Barney will be killed."

Pomp and Tony were no less quick in also coming to the rescue.

All three fired. As chance had it all fired at the same leopard and every shot told.

The animal pitched forward dead across Barney's body. The other two leopards tumbled over him, and by the time they had recovered themselves the repeaters had got into working order again.

Crack—ack—ack!

Another leopard tumbled over. Before the marksmen could again fire the surviving animal with a snarling cry fled and was quickly out of range.

Frank descended and rushed to Barney's side.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### POMP'S THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

BUT before the famous inventor could reach him, Barney was upon his feet.

"Begorra, that's something that every man can't say!" he exclaimed,

with twinkling eyes. "I went out to get one leopard and was the cause av baggin' four av them. Shure, I'll have wan av them skins tanned and send it to the Pope, so I will."

"You are a pretty good decoy for leopards," laughed young Buckden. "By Jove, Barney, you're a valuable man."

"Have yez just discovered that?" retorted the quick-witted Irishman.

It required but a short time for Barney and Pomp to take off the leopards' skins.

There was a skin for each of them, and they were carefully stowed away in the wagon.

Once more the Steam Man went on down the broad avenue.

There were many other streets diverging from this one, but they were more narrow and had not the appearance of this one.

It was deemed best to keep to the main thoroughfare.

At intervals a halt was called before some wonderful building of curious architecture and time was spent in studying it.

"Look here, Buckden!" said Frank, finally, "how is this? What of that temple you wrote me about, which was so abundantly stocked with anacondas?"

"Oh, that is a good ways from here," replied Buckden. "This street I believe extends for a distance of twenty miles. Half way to the other end is a public square and there we will find the temple. At least, so I was informed by the native, Metlo."

"Very good! then we shall be on the lookout for the anacondas."

The words were not out of Frank's mouth when a warning cry came from Barney who was at the forward end of the wagon.

"Luk out fer yesilf, Misther Frank!" he cried; "there's a big log across the road an' if yez don't luk out we'll be overturned by it."

Frank quickly closed the throttle and applied the brake.

Right across the Steam Man's path was what looked like a log of palm, and it stretched from a clump of palms to a thicket which grew out of the paving stones full thirty feet away.

But quick as he had been Frank was not in time to prevent the Steam Man from stumbling against it.

The result was terrifying.

The log was instantly an animated creature. Quick as a flash it bounded in air and ran up in huge coils, while the savage head of a huge anaconda emerged from the palm clump.

Before Frank could make a move to retreat, the big snake had thrown its giant coils around the wagon and over the cage.

The huge head was thrust against the steel netting, seeking an opening.

"Tare an' 'ounds!" yelled Barney in terror. "Av it ain't another wan ov the snakes! Be me sowl, he's puttin' his head in at the windy!"

This was a terrifying fact.

The anaconda's head suddenly was thrust through one of the port-holes.

This chanced to be one of large circumference and the snake's whole body began to slide into the cage.

Frank Reade, Jr., seized a hatchet and made a blow at the snake.

But the reptile's head struck him in the breast and knocked him over.

Its keen fangs tore his shirt and lacerated his flesh. When he picked himself up he was alone in the wagon with the snake.

The anaconda's body was sliding rapidly in through the port-hole. Barney and Pomp and Buckden had fled from the wagon through the rear door.

"Come, Frank, for God's sake!" cried Buckden, reaching in and pulling Frank toward the door. "Don't stay there, or you will be killed."

Frank saw the snake making ready to dive at him again.

He knew that it was folly to risk his life in such a manner.

So accepting discretion as the better part of valor, the young inventor dashed from the wagon.

The huge snake's body was rapidly sliding into the wagon.

The explorers dumbfounded and irresolute stood outside and watched the proceeding with curious sensations.

"Well, upon me sowl," cried Barney, "howiver will we get the omadoun out av that? Bad cess to his ugly shape, say I."

"By Jove, that is a stickler," declared Buckden. "How will we ever get him out of the cage?"

"At present he is master of the situation," declared Frank.

"I jus' fink dat ole snake am gwine fo' to gib us some trubble," declared Pomp.

"It looks like it."

"Begorra, why not give him a bit av cold lead?"

But the words were not off Barney's lips when an appalling thing happened.

The snake's body was now all in the cage. The huge reptile was squirming and thrashing about like mad.

Suddenly the door of the cage shut with a snap.

Then, to add to the horror and discomfort of the situation, the Steam Man started away at full speed.

The snake's movements had in some way pulled open the throttle. A fearful groan escaped Frank's lips.

"My God! we are lost!"

Cries of dismay escaped the others.

"Catch him!"

"Shut the valve!"

But they might as well have tried to catch the wind.

The Steam Man was off like a flash. Down the avenue he went with clanking tread.

After him with despairing souls ran the explorers, vainly trying to overtake him.

In the cage, unable to extricate himself, the huge anaconda was taking an enforced ride.

What more strange or thrilling predicament could be imagined?

Down the avenue went the strange procession. The Steam Man went on and was soon out of sight through a vista of trees and overhanging vines.

The seriousness of the affair to our adventurers could not be estimated at the moment.

Left in that terrible wilderness to find their way on foot back to Canpeachy was not a pleasant thing to contemplate.

There did not seem to remain any doubt but that the Steam Man would keep on until it should come in disastrous collision with some object.

The result would almost surely be to smash the machinery, and in that out of the way part of the world it would be by no means easy to repair it.

All these misgivings and fears assailed the explorers.

Frank Reade, Jr., was usually possessed of iron nerves.

But if ever there was a time in his life when those nerves were sorely tried, it was now.

It did not seem to him possible that the Steam Man could escape unharmed.

"My soul!" he gasped, as he staggered on. "We are lost!"

Indeed, it seemed true.

Yet the explorers ran on, hoping at every turn to see the Steam Man all safe and sound.

But they seemed doomed to disappointment.

Suddenly a terrible cry went up from Barney.

"Howly Mither! Luk out!" he yelled. "Phwativer is that ahead of us?"

Every one came to a halt.

Just ahead of them lay what looked again like a prostrate palm trunk, but the experienced gaze of our adventurers now proved its true character.

It was another huge anaconda which was stretching itself across the roadway.

The long, sinuous horrid body, in its immense proportions, was truly a terrifying thing to look at.

For a moment our adventurers stood looking at it with dismay.

It had extended itself across the street, no doubt just after the Steam Man had passed else the Man would have cut it to pieces.

"Glory fo' goodness!" cried Pomp, "whatebber will dis yer chile do? Ugh! I nebber did like snakes!"

"Nor I, Pomp!" cried Tony Buckden, with a shiver. "What shall we do about it, Frank?"

"Discretion is valor's better part," said Frank. "We will not try to cut our way through the foe this time, but rather go around it."

"Good!" cried Tony. "But can we do it?"

The avenue was fully one hundred feet wide here.

It seemed easy enough to go the other side of the line of palms, and the explorers made a move to do so.

But they had barely reached the other side of the avenue when a thrilling thing occurred.

The space between the palms and the buildings was hardly ten feet.

Suddenly, as they were passing through this narrow space, there was a rustling sound above, and a long, sinuous body shot down from a window of one of the buildings.

The next moment Pomp was encircled by the folds of a huge anaconda.

A startled yell went up from the astonished darky.

The others recoiled in amazement and horror.

Then, before any of them had time to act, Pomp was drawn up like a puppet and through the window above.

He went out of sight like a flash.

But a tremendous uproar was heard in the building, and the pounding and thumping of heavy bodies was heard.

Pomp's cries for help were agonizing.

For a few moments our adventurers were so overcome with horror that they hardly knew how to act or what to say.

"My God!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., "Pomp is being killed. Why do we stand here inactive? We must save him!"

"Right!" cried Tony Buckden. "Come on, friends! Lively, now!"

No second bidding was needed.

Into the building they rushed.

Some long stairs were encountered. Up these they sprung.

This brought them to a landing above, and into a large chamber.

Up through this and through the fallen roof there grew a high palm tree.

Partly wound around the trunk of this were a part of the snake's coils.

The other part of the snake's body was wound about Pomp, and the darky was seen to be unconscious, and for aught his agonized friends knew, dead.

The monster anaconda's head was erect, and its forked tongue was darting from its mouth as it faced the new-comers angrily.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw that if Pomp was to be saved, quick work must be made.

With a long drawn breath the young inventor sprang forward, crying:

"Aim at his head, friends. Work quickly, for I fear Pomp is dead."

But no further adjuration was needed.

The others did work quickly.

Barney raised his rifle and took aim at the monster's head.

It was an uncertain aim, as the snake's head kept gyrating and moving about in a lively manner.

But by great good luck the bullet struck the monster's lower jaw.

It was instantly broken and hung limply. The snake gave almost a shriek of agony, and its folds partly relaxed.

Instantly Frank sprang forward and made a blow at the reptile with his knife.

It was a lucky blow, and cut a deep gash in the monster's body, half severing it to the backbone.

Barney also rushed upon the snake.

The monster made a game fight, however. Its mighty coils relaxed, and it dropped Pomp from them and began to thrash about in fury.

Frank and Tony Buckden were knocked down like puppets.

The snake's huge body literally filled the huge chamber, and thrashing about so furiously kept our explorers one moment upon their feet and the next upon the floor.

Hacking at the reptile with his knife, Frank had inflicted many wounds.

Blood flowed in torrents, and the reptile was evidently weakening. Barney at an opportune moment raised his clubbed rifle and made a blow at the snake's head.

It was a lucky stroke.

The reptile was almost instantly brained, and the battle was over.

## CHAPTER IX.

### INTO THE DEPTHS.

THE battle was won, but what of Pomp?

The darky lay in an inanimate heap upon the stone floor.

Frank was quickly by his side, however. His first move was to feel the darky's pulse.

With a cry of joy he reached for a whisky flask which Buckden produced.

"He is alive!" he cried. "It is about certain that we shall save him."

This, however, could not yet be determined. The darky had suffered quite a severe squeezing, and there was no certainty that bones had not been broken.

Frank applied the whisky to Pomp's lips. Then the others rubbed his hands and feet vigorously.

In a few moments Pomp gasped and opened his eyes.

"Glory for goodness, Marse Frank," he whispered, hoarsely, "am dis chile been sabed?" I done fought I was a gone coon."

"You're all right, Pomp!" cried Frank, joyfully. "You're sure you can move without pain, are you? Try and roll over."

Pomp did as he was bid.

To the joy of all it was discovered that although the darky had experienced quite a severe squeezing he was practically uninjured.

In a few moments he was able to get upon his feet.

He was a trifle stiff and sore, but this bid fair to desert him in a short while.

Then it was seen that the anaconda was a monster.

Indeed its huge coils seemed to occupy the larger part of the chamber.

All had good reason to congratulate themselves upon their escape from what might have been death for Pomp at least.

But now that the affair was over there was no use in further waste of time in the vicinity.

It was necessary at once to continue their quest for the Steam Man.

Accordingly they started to descend the stairs.

But the incidents of the moment were by no means spent. A strange and startling thing occurred.

No sooner had Barney put his foot upon the topmost stairs than the whole affair crumbled and fell.

Down went the Celt through a cloud of dust and rotten stone. It was a sudden happening and took the others quite off their guard.

"Heavens!" cried Frank, recoiling. "What does that mean?"

"The stairs have given way!" cried Buckden, with horror.

"Barney has gone down with them."

"He is likely killed."

"Massy sakes alib!" cried Pomp, wildly. "Dat am awful. We must do somfin' fo' to save Barney."

But now as the dust cleared, a horrible realization dawned upon the explorers.

At their feet yawned a dark abyss.

How deep it was they could not guess, for the stairs and the floor beneath had succumbed and gone down with Barney.

The bottom of the abyss could not be seen.

It was safe to assume, however, that it was really a cellar underneath the building, and therefore not more than a dozen feet or more in depth.

Frank leaned over and shouted:

"Barney! If you are alive, answer me!"

"Shure an' I will that, Misther Frank," came up the Celt's voice from the abyss. "It's not kilt I am."

"Are you badly hurt?"

"Shure, an' not a bit av it, Misther Frank. Only a bit av a bruise on me head an' me arrum. Oi'm all roight."

"Thank Heaven for that."

But the question now was, how were the three men to descend from their aerial position?

There was no other stairs, and it was a little too great a height to risk a jump with safety.

But Frank Reade, Jr., was not the one to be long in a quandary.

He quickly hit upon a plan. Advancing to one of the windows, he looked down to the pavements below.

It was a height of possibly twenty feet. But a jump was out of the question.

However, some stout vines grew over the face of the building.

These offered a good safe hold, and by means of these the three explorers clambered down to the ground floor.

The first thing to do now was to rescue Barney.

It was found, however, that the redoubtable Celt did not require any assistance.

He had discovered a way to clamber out of the cellar, and in a moment came rushing out of the ruin.

Congratulations were in order over the happy escape of all.

The incidents of the day had their effect upon the explorers.

Already Tony Buckden had begun to sicken of the enterprise.

He had really gained the end he sought, which was to visit the city of Mazendia.

Of course he had not as yet succeeded in locating the treasure spoken of by the Indian guide Metlo.

But the treasure was only a slight inducement for Tony to remain amid the innumerable perils of the Central American wilds.

He had in fact more money at his command than he could expend, and, of course, gold had little temptation for him.

As for Frank Reade, Jr., the treasure had not constituted the object of his visit.

That he had already accomplished in finding Tony Buckden.

Not one in the party but was badly disaffected and wanted to go home.

"I jus' fink home am de bes' place aftah all," said Pomp.

"Begorra, that's th'ree," sang Barney. "Be it iver so humble there's no place loike home, even av it's in a pig pen."

"Good!" cried Frank. "Well, we will soon give you a chance to see home, boys, if we can find the Steam Man intact."

"Which Heaven grant we may," said Tony, fervently.

"Then you're really ready to go home, Tony?"

"Oh, yes. I am anxious to; the way of it is, I have sickened of roaming in this accursed clime. Father says he will take me into Wall street with him, and I'm going to accept his offer."

"Good for you, Tony!" cried Frank. "It is a good time for you to settle down."

"I shall do it."

They were now once more pushing their way along the avenue. The Steam Man did not seem to be anywhere in sight.

What was the fate of the invention they could only guess.

They pushed on rapidly.

Suddenly they came out into what seemed like the plaza, or public square of the city.

Here wonderful sights were presented.

Mammoth ruins surrounded the square on all sides.

These were overgrown with vegetation of all kinds.

Clinging vines adorned the walls, and huge trees of the deciduous species grew out of the roof and piles of moldering stone.

Everywhere all was desolation and decay.

But one building, massive and commanding, with huge pillars of some strange blue stone, seemed comparatively well preserved.

This building at once attracted Tony Buckden's attention.

He clapped his hands excitedly.

"As I live!" he declared, "that looks like the temple described by Metlo."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank.

"That is the truth."

"But where are the anacondas?"

"Where?"

The two men exchanged glances.

Certainly, there was not a big snake in sight. But after all, this did not disprove Metlo's story.

"De snakes may be dar all de same, Marse Frank," declared Pomp.

"Of course," agreed Tony. "That is logical enough."

"What shall we do?"

"Enter of course."

"It is well to proceed with care."

"Very well, we can do that."

But Barney and Pomp had already sprung up the steps of the temple. The next moment they disappeared inside of the place.

Frank and Tony followed.

As they entered the temple they saw that it was a high arched structure with evidences of having once been a building of great beauty.

There was not a snake to be seen.

"Upon my word," ejaculated Tony, "this has every appearance of being the building described by Metlo."

"It very likely is," said Frank. "I have no doubt of it."

"But he described it as being literally alive with anacondas."

"It may have been, and they may have lately deserted the place."

"It looks like it."

"Of course."

"Then we are in great luck."

"Yes."

"But the treasure—ah!"

Buckden paused before a ring in the stone floor.

It was an iron ring firmly joined to a slab of stone. The New Yorker bent down and began to pull upon it.

The instant he did so a thrilling thing happened.

There was a strange whirring sound as of machinery buzzing, and then a grating noise.

Quick as a flash the stone dropped and Buckden went out of sight like a meteor.

Down into a black void went the young New Yorker.

He was swallowed up as literally as if engulfed in the sea.

For an instant Frank Reade, Jr., was so overcome with horror that he did not know what to do.

Then a wailing cry broke from his lips:

"Oh, my God!" he cried. "Tony has gone to his death."

Of course Frank had no idea as to the depth of the abyss or where it went to.

Buckden, for aught he knew, had fallen to the center of the earth. The young inventor was overcome with horror and agony.

"Something must be done!" he cried, wildly. "He must be saved!"

But what was to be done?

It was an awful question.

For a moment Frank knew not what answer to make. He stood like one in a trance.

Then he made sudden and swift action. He threw himself flat upon his stomach and shouted down into the abyss of darkness.

"Tony!" he cried, at the top of his voice. "Where are you? If you can hear me, give me an answer!"

But no sound came back.

All was the stillness of the grave.

It seemed as if Tony Buckden's fate was sealed. Certainly, if alive and uninjured, he would answer.

Frank shouted again and again.

But no answer came back from the awful stillness below. It was like the silence of the grave.

A queer sensation came over Frank.

He felt as if likely to faint.

A cold perspiration broke out upon him, and he seemed dizzy and sick.

Then a strange and awful thing happened.

Suddenly and without warning, the stone beneath him began to slide. He felt himself going, and made a spasmotic effort to save himself.

In vain was this.

Just as he was about to recoil from the verge of the awful pit, there was a grinding sound as of mortar giving way, and then, wholly unable to save himself, Frank went headlong into the abyss.

Down, down he felt himself going.

He clutched at the air wildly, experienced a sense of suffocation, then he felt a sudden shock and knew that he was in water.

It seemed as if his breath must leave his body before he came up out of this water.

Coming to the surface, he drew in a deep breath, and then struck out to swim.

The water was icy cold, and he knew that its depth must be great.

Also, he believed its extent to be considerable, as the reverberations coming to his ears were far-reaching and loud.

Frank had no means of knowing into what sort of place he had fallen, or what was to be the outcome of this adventure.

## CHAPTER X. THE SEALED CHAMBER.

BUT he did know that he was in the embrace of some underground lake or reservoir of water.

That it was not a river he was assured as there was no current whatever.

Involuntarily he looked about for light.

There was a faint square far above his head. This he knew must be from the aperture through which he had fallen.

Certainly that must have been a fearful distance to have fallen. To have survived that fall seemed a miracle.

But that light was too far away to be of any service.

All upon the surface of the underground lake was Stygian blackness.

"I don't know where I am, nor if I shall ever get out of here alive," muttered the young inventor, "but I must try. I will swim as far as I can."

And this he proceeded to do.

Striking out he forced his way swiftly through the water.

Pausing to rest, he suddenly heard a startling sound near him.

It was a splash in the water.

At first Frank instinctively thought of the presence of some submarine monster, but recollection came to him in time.

"Tony!" he cried; "is that you?"

"Thank God!" was the reply.

Neither could see the other, but they swam side by side in the darkness.

"Thank Heaven, you are alive!" said Frank, sincerely. "I feared you were dead."

"I am alive," said Buckden, "but I fear we will never get out of this."

"Why did you not answer my call?" asked Frank.

"I did not hear it."

"Is that possible?"

"For some moments after coming to the surface the shock made me deaf."

"Oh, I see."

"What sort of a place are we in?"

"I cannot imagine."

"I pray there is an outlet somewhere. If not, we are done for."

"That is true," agreed Frank. "Let us pray for escape."

The words had barely left his lips, when Frank's hand struck an object. In a moment his fingers closed upon it.

It was the edge of a stone coping, and quickly he drew himself out of the water upon what seemed like a platform.

It was really the shore of the underground reservoir or lake.

Frank secured a foothold and then turned to Buckden.

"Are you there, Tony?"

"Yes."

"Give me your hand and I will help you up."

"All right."

The next moment Buckden was drawn safely up out of the water.

Both men now stood once more upon terra firma.

"Well, we're out of the water, anyway," cried Tony, as he proceeded to wring the water out of his coat.

"Yes."

"But where in the mischief are we?"

"Give it up."

All was Stygian darkness about them.

But Frank remembered suddenly that in an inner pocket he had a small pocket lantern.

This was in a water-proof case and consequently had not suffered by the immersion.

There were matches in the same case and Frank lit one on a dry part of the stone coping.

Then he lit the wick of the lantern and the vicinity was dimly illumined.

But the moment Frank turned the rays of the lantern to the rear both gave a wild start.

A frightful object confronted their gaze. At first sight Frank had thought it a living object.

It was a monster dragon with wide open mouth and awful jaws.

But a second glance revealed the fact that it was not animate and could consequently do them no harm.

It was of some peculiar quality of dark colored greenish stone, and was a remarkably life-like representation.

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Buckden, "but that gave me a start."

"I must confess to the same," said Frank, with a smile.

"It is a clever imitation of a dragon, isn't it?"

"Indeed, it is."

Both adventurers now advanced and began to examine the monster critically.

It was a wonderful bit of workmanship in very truth.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Buckden, "I doubt if our sculptors of the present day could ever equal this."

"I do not think they could surpass it much."

"It certainly attests that the ancient inhabitants of Mazendla were a remarkably talented people."

"Right you are."

"But the question now is, how are we to get out of this place?"

"Exactly."

"There certainly must be some other way out besides that through which we came—ah!"

Frank gave a gasping cry and came to a halt.

Just at his feet was a ghastly sight.

It was a heap of bones.

In a promiscuous fashion they were heaped there. Human bones and those of the cayman, a species of crocodile, were there all piled up together.

The two explorers gazed at the spectacle with amazement.

This was the first indication of human remains that they had found thus far.

There were human skulls and the complete skeletons of the crocodiles. A quick comprehension came to Frank.

"I have it!" he cried.

"Well?"

"In my opinion this lake was once the abode of these crocodiles. The ancient rulers placed them there for a certain purpose."

"What could it have been?"

"Well, supposing a man committed some crime. It may be that he was thrown into this place as a method of punishment, for the crocodiles to tear to pieces."

"Indeed, I believe you are right, Mr. Reade," cried Buckden, "but what a number of victims they must have had."

"For aught we know the bed of this lake may be paved with human skeletons."

It was a grim, horrible thing to think of.

Both men shivered.

Then Tony reached over to pick up one of the skulls.

The mere motion caused the horrid pile to disintegrate and relapse into a heap of gray dust.

Ages had passed since these bones had been deposited there, as this very action would attest.

"Come away," said Frank, with a shiver. "Let's find our way out of here."

Together they passed by the heap of moldering bones.

A deep, arched passage lay before them. It was not a long one, and suddenly came to an end in a startling manner.

A huge iron gate made of transverse bars confronted them.

It was a ponderous affair, and there were huge bolts to hold it shut.

It did not seem as if they could ever hope to pass through it.

"My soul, we are badly stuck!" cried Tony. "We'll never get out of here alive, Frank."

Frank looked aghast.

There seemed no means at command to force the mighty gate.

It certainly seemed an insurmountable barrier. It also seemed the only means of exit from the place.

The two men looked at each other in utter dismay.

What was to be done?

Could they remain here in this place and suffer tamely a death by starvation? Frank was resolute.

"There is just one thing about it," he declared. "We've got to force our way through that gate."

"Good for you!" cried Tony. "I'm with you!"

"It must be done!"

"But can it be done?"

"I see no reason why not. We will make a valiant effort. It is better than tamely submitting to death."

"Indeed, much better."

"Here goes!"

Frank advanced and placed both hands upon one of the iron bars of the gate.

It was thickly encrusted with rust; yet neither looked for the result which followed.

Frank gave the gate a quick, sharp pull. Then he gave a leap backward.

It was just in time.

He was not a moment too soon.

Down came the whole affair in a clangling heap.

If it had struck Frank he might have been seriously injured. But fortunately it did not.

The action of time had rusted hinges and locks, and the gate was just ready to fall.

A great cloud of dust was raised which nearly overwhelmed the two explorers.

They emerged from it completely covered and wheezing and puffing.

"Jupiter!" gasped Tony, "there's no question about getting out of here now, Frank."

"No, not if this dust don't kill us," replied Frank.

"Whew! it is fearful."

After a time, however, the dust cloud was dispelled and they emerged all safe.

Then the first impulse was to break through the archway.

They did and came to a flight of stairs.

Up these they ran at full speed.

Arrived at the top, they were confronted by an astounding fact.

They stood in a small square chamber. So far as they could see there was no door or window or other mode of exit.

Only bare walls of stone were about them upon all sides.

"Well!" exclaimed Frank, in amazement. "What the deuce does this mean?"

"Where are we?"

"Sure enough."

"Can you see any way out of here?"

"I cannot."

The two men looked at each other blankly. It was some time before either ventured to speak.

"This is the toughest yet," said Buckden, finally. "What is your idea, Frank?"

A light broke across the young inventor's handsome face.

"I have an idea!" he cried.

"What is it?"

Frank went and critically examined the walls of the chamber before he ventured to answer.

"This is a sealed chamber," he said, finally. "It is sealed that nobody may find the secrets of this underground charnel house."

"A sealed chamber!" gasped Buckden. "My God! then we are lost, for that is equivalent to being buried alive. Our end has come!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### OUT OF IMPRISONMENT.

It was a terrible despairing cry which Tony Buckden gave.

It came from the depths of his soul, and embodied utter hopelessness.

Indeed, the situation looked to be a desperate one. If it was indeed true that they were the inmates of a sealed chamber their fate seemed sealed.

What was to be done?

Surely they could not submit to a slow lingering death by starvation in that wretched place.

Frank went forward and began to examine the masonry of the chamber walls.

The stone was a peculiar sandstone, and while it showed evidence of age and the discolorations of time it was yet firm and hard.

But the mortar would yield to the point of the knife. Frank at once began work upon it.

"My plan," he declared, "is to displace the mortar as far as possible, and perhaps we can loosen some of these stones and make an aperture large enough to get out through."

"Good!" cried Buckden, joyfully. "You've hit the mark, Frank."

"I hope so," said the young inventor, modestly; "time will tell. First we must make sure that the mortar will give way."

Together they went to work upon the mortar.

It yielded readily to the points of their knives and soon had been displaced about one of the smaller stones.

To their joy this yielded and the stone was removed.

But a second layer was discovered just beyond. How many more were beyond this they could not guess.

But Frank believed that only this layer separated them from the outer air and freedom.

Accordingly with renewed hope the two imprisoned men went to work.

With a will they hacked away at the crumbling stone and mortar.

In a very short space of time another stone had been loosened. A third was quickly displaced, making an aperture sufficiently large enough to allow a body to pass through.

Now the second layer was attacked. To the agreeable surprise of both it was a very rotten stone and yielded readily.

In a very few moments daylight streamed into the place.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank. "We are sure to escape, Tony!"

"So it seems!" cried the young New Yorker, cheerily. "This is what comes of good pluck."

"You are right."

Peering through the small hole made, Frank saw that they would come out right in the main body of the temple.

Both men now worked like beavers.

In a few moments one of the stones was displaced. Another quickly followed, and then they crawled through and into the open air.

The relief experienced was beyond description.

To drink in the pure air and the health-giving sunlight once more was a boon of no small sort.

But after a time they began to think of Barney and Pomp and the Steam Man.

It was certainly advisable to find them at once.

The fate of the Steam Man was a matter of conjecture. But Frank arose from his reclining position and said:

"Come, Tony, old man, we can't stay here any longer. There's work for us to do."

"All right, Frank."

Frank started to leave the temple, but Tony chanced to glance across an inner court-yard.

"Wait a moment, Frank!" he cried.

"What is it?"

"Just look across that court-yard. What is it?"

Frank looked and gave a start of surprise.

"Upon my soul!" he exclaimed. "What sort of a creature can it be?"

"Let us investigate."

"All right."

"Lead the way."

Through a series of arches they went and reached the court-yard. Across it they made their way.

The object of their surprise was a strange looking statue.

It was sculptured out of the same peculiar greenish stone as the dragon seen below stairs.

The statue was a compromise between a man and some strange wild animal resembling the panther.

Certainly a more life like and hideous monstrosity they had never beheld before. They gazed upon it in wonderment.

"Have you ever seen its equal?" asked Tony in amazement.

"Never!"

"What is it intended to represent?"

"Like the statues of Bacchus and the Centaurs found in ancient Greece, it is a creation of mythical sort."

"I believe you're right. Hello! What is this? Another trap-door?"

Tony paused before a heavy iron ring set in the tiled floor.

"Don't trouble it," said Frank. "It may let us down into another underground lake."

"Do you believe it?"

"I should fear it."

But Tony could not resist the temptation to insert his fingers in the ring and give the stone a lift. It was a reckless thing to do.

The result was startling.

The stone yielded, and the next moment Buckden lifted it from its bed, disclosing a cavity beneath some four feet long by two wide. Stone steps were revealed leading downward. For a moment the two explorers looked at each other.

"What will we do?" asked Buckden.

"Investigate," said Frank, tersely.

"But it is dark down there."

"That doesn't matter," said the young inventor, coolly. "We will regulate that."

Then, from his pocket, Frank produced a small folding pocket lantern, an invention of his own.

He lit this and boldly ventured down into the place.

He went down a dozen steps, and then a wonderful sight was spread before him.

A large chamber, about fifteen feet in length by ten in breadth, hewn out of solid rock, was revealed.

The walls were adorned with shelves, and about the stone floor were chests of metal.

These chests contained coins and silver and gold cups, flagons, pots and all sorts of ware, thrown about promiscuously and in heaps.

For a moment the two explorers astounded, gazed at the scene before them.

Both were so dumfounded that they could not speak.

One thing was apparent to them, and it brought the blood in surges to their temples.

The treasure of Mazendla was found.

It would be quite impossible to enumerate its mighty value.

But it would seem that it must be up in the millions. For how many centuries it had remained here it would be quite hard to say.

"Heavens!" gasped Frank. "Here is enough to enrich us many times, Tony."

"I should say so."

"It is the wealth of a king."

"To be sure."

"But what great good can it do us? We have got enough."

"That is so."

The two explorers proceeded to make an examination of the contents of the treasure room.

Among all the gold and silver Frank looked for diamonds.

But these seemed scarce.

However, he did find a few in a small silver casket. These he secured, and, with Tony, took several bags of the coins and some of the quaint silverware.

"Well," said Tony, speculatively, "what shall we do with all this stuff, Frank? It is too bad to leave it here."

"I have an idea."

"What?"

"Let us take it to New York, convert it into greenbacks and disperse it in charities."

"Good!" cried Tony, readily, "that is a fine idea."

They now ascended to the main room of the temple.

For the first time Frank thought of Barney and Pomp.

The two servitors had wandered off in some other part of the temple and were not in sight.

Frank shouted for them, but no answer came back.

This seemed a little strange to the young inventor, and he began to fear that some harm had come to the two men.

"That is queer!" he muttered. "Why don't they answer?"

Again Frank shouted. This time an answer came back, but it seemed a mile away.

Frank was not a little vexed.

"Confound the rascals!" he muttered. "Where have they gone to?"

"We had better go in quest of them," suggested Tony. "Harm may have overtaken them."

"You are right."

They were about to follow up this plan when a startling thing occurred.

Suddenly from the distance beyond the temple doors there came a thrilling and yet familiar sound.

It was a prolonged shriek, a distant note from the ear-splitting whistle of the Steam Man.

## CHAPTER XII.

WHICH IS THE END.

FRANK READE, JR., gave a great cry of surprise and joy.

"They have found the Man," he cried. "We are in luck."

"No," said Tony, putting a hand on Frank's arm. "You are wrong. That is not so. Listen!"

The shrill whistle of the Steam Man was still going.

"I have it," said Buckden, positively. "In some manner the whistle valve has opened, and it will continue to blow until steam is all blown off!"

"Right!" cried Frank, excitedly; "why didn't I think of that. Let us go at once in quest of the machine."

The two men started at once out of the temple.

"Wait," he said.

"What for?" asked Frank.

"What about Barney and Pomp?"

Here was a conundrum.

There was little time in which to decide. But Frank decided quickly.

"Enough!" he cried; "they must take care of themselves. They are abundantly able. Our life all depends upon recovering the Steam Man."

"You are right!" cried Buckden.

So away the two men sped.

It was easy enough to locate the Man now, as the whistle was an infallible guide.

Straight across the plaza they ran, and turned into a broad avenue. Here, on the verge of a clump of palms, they beheld a thrilling sight.

There was the Steam Man standing motionless on the edge of the palm clump.

The huge anaconda was yet writhing in the cage. Frank guessed the meaning of all at once.

The Steam Man had been saved by a lucky chance.

The snake, in its writhings, had not only closed the throttle by twisting the rein about its body, but had also pulled open the whistle valve in the same manner.

The two explorers came to a halt at first, and regarded the spectacle with much wonder.

Then Frank cried:

"Hurrah! We've got the best of it. We can easily end the fight now."

Straight up to the cage Frank ran. It was an easy matter to climb up and draw aim at the anaconda's head through the loop-hole.

Crack!

The shot pierced the snake's brain.

The head dropped lifeless, but the huge body continued to writhe in the throes of death.

Frank swung the door of the cage open.

"Come, Tony!" he cried, cheerily. "Let's pull the monster out, and we will then have the Steam Man once more in our possession."

Buckden needed no urging.

Both laid hold of the snake's huge coils. It was a hard tug, but the huge monster was finally pulled out of the cage.

Then the two men sprang in and proceeded to put things to rights. The snake had done no material damage, but the odor of its presence in the cage was something frightful.

However, Frank quickly dispelled this with a chemical, and then the Man's course was set for a return to the treasure temple.

No obstacle was encountered upon the return.

Soon the Steam Man came in sight of the temple.

As it did so, Barney and Pomp were seen rushing down the steps. Their joy to discover that the Steam Man had been safely recovered knew no bounds.

"I tell yo', Marse Frank, dat dar am big piles ob gold an' silver in dat ar temple," cried Pomp.

"Bejabers, that's so!" cried Barney. "An' I cud hardly get the naygur to come away from it."

"Where did you rascals go?" asked Frank, sharply.

"Way up in de top ob de temple," replied Pomp.

"Didn't you hear me when I called?"

"Bejabers, we did that, an' it was mesilf as answered yez," replied Barney. "But I couldn't get the naygur to come away."

"Did you hear the whistle of the Steam Man?"

"I did that, an' that brought us down quick enough," replied Barney.

"Well," said Frank, with satisfaction, "we are in luck. Now for home."

"Ki dar, Marse Frank. What about dat gold an' silver?" cried Pomp.

Frank looked at Buckden.

"Is it worth while to return for it?" he asked.

"Oh, I think so," replied the New Yorker.

"All right."

Barney and Pomp eagerly started for the steps of the temple, but a startling sight caused them to draw back.

Suddenly, from what seemed like a deep archway leading into black depths beyond at the lower end of the temple wall, a large anaconda glided into view.

It was a monster of its species.

"Back into the cage," shouted Barney and Pomp.

The two servitors had barely time to accomplish this move when the snake glided swift as the wind up over the temple steps.

"Look—look!" cried Buckden.

An astounding sight was next witnessed. Out from the archway there emerged more of the huge reptiles.

Some of them were monstrous in proportions.

The archway was literally choked with them.

Ali seemed to be making for the temple. Truly, the wonderful tale rendered by Metlo was true after all.

There seemed legions of the snakes. They swarmed over the temple wall and through all the passages.

Dumbfounded, our adventurers stood and watched them.

"Great heavens!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr., "what a sight that is!"

"I never saw its equal!"

"Golly! amn't den de bigges' snakes we'se seed yit?"

"Tare an' ounds! av the divils get aifter the Steam Man——"

"Look out!"

Several of the huge reptiles seemed making for the Steam Man. Frank's hand was on the throttle rein, and he was about to pull it, when a terrible thing happened.

There was a dull, distant rumbling like thunder.

The air became suddenly still and oppressive. Instinctively Frank knew at that moment what was coming.

"The earthquake!" he shouted. "Steady, all! Look out for yourselves!"

Frank gave the throttle rein a yank. The Steam Man ran instantly to the center of the plaza and came to a halt.

Then a mighty, sullen roar was heard, a terrific gust of wind swept down the avenue, and the earthquake came.

For a moment it seemed as if the Steam Man would be overturned.

The ground rose and fell in billows.

The air was filled with the thunder and crash of falling buildings. The temple of treasure, which was full of the anacondas, was literally leveled to the dust.

It remained a great, moldering heap of ruins. Dozens, perhaps hundreds of the huge snakes were crushed in the ruins.

The treasure of Mazendia was beyond the reach of our adventurers now.

In three minutes the entire disturbance was over.

The city presented a vastly different aspect now.

Many of the mammoth buildings were a heap of ruins. Trees were uprooted, and a scene of havoc was upon every hand.

"Golly fo' goodness!" gasped the startled Pomp, as he pulled himself together. "I kain't say dat I'm stuck on yarthquakes, am yo' Marse Frank?"

"No," replied Frank, as he adjusted a sprained shoulder. "And what is more, we will start this very moment for civilization, and the land where earthquakes never happen."

"Good!" cried Tony Buckden. "I'm with you."

"Bejabers, I'm the same," cried Barney,

Not one gave thought to the deeply buried treasure of Mazendia now.

It proved in after days that their decision was a wise one.

The silverware preserved by Frank and Tony, as well as coins, turned out to be a weak alloy. The diamonds were the real treasure, and Frank had secured them all.

So the treasure of Mazendia yet remains unearthened. Certainly, it was never thought worth while by our explorers to ever return for it.

It required some time to pick their way out of the ruined city.

But they finally succeeded, and emerged upon the vast table-land of Tanada once more.

The Steam Man at a rapid rate of speed kept on the return route to Campeachy.

But the return trip was not devoid of incident.

When two days out from Mazendia, the Steam Man came to a vast morass between high mountains, and surrounded by tall reeds. The Steam Man on the way out had found little difficulty in skirting this to the eastward.

But rains had since fallen and the morass was a lake.

Any attempt to go over the return route now must result in sinking the Steam Man in great depths of mire.

So a halt was called and a consultation held.

There seemed to be no other way of surmounting this obstacle but to camp and wait patiently for the water to subside.

This meant a delay of several days, but it was a virtuous necessity, as it was clearly impossible for the Steam Man to climb the rough mountain sides.

Accordingly camp was made.

A good clump of palms was found and the fires in the furnace were banked.

It was entirely out of the question for four men to remain cooped up three or four days in the cage of the Steam Man, inactive and dull.

The natural project was a hunting trip and this was at once decided upon.

What sort of game our explorers were in quest of it is not easy to say. In fact, it might as well be said that their quest was as much one of exploration as quest of game.

They started early one morning and climbed the mountain side.

This was rocky, but fortunately clear of brush or dense chaparral. Several rabbits were bagged and some birds of beautiful plumage. Then just as they were upon the verge of the crater of an extinct volcano, the stirring events of the day began.

Suddenly Barney, who was skirting the edge of the crater, gave a sharp cry, and as his companions turned, they were horrified to see him suddenly disappear from sight.

"Great heavens!" gasped Frank. "What has become of Barney?"

All rushed to an opening in the ground through which the Celt had disappeared.

As they reached it, a terrific roar came up from below. It required but a glance for the explorers to perceive a horrible state of affairs.

Below, at a depth of some forty feet, was a cavern.

The entrance seemed to be from the crater, and clinging vines lined the passage down which Barney had fallen.

A treacherous coating of moss had covered the hole, and the unsuspecting Irishman had stepped full upon it, with the result we have seen.

In falling, Barney had clutched wildly at the vines, and now he hung twenty feet from the bottom by a single vine, which swayed and seemed likely to snap at any moment.

Just below, upon the floor of the cavern, crouched two fierce tigers.

They roared and snarled savagely and made upward leaps to reach the Celt.

Barney was white with fear and clung desperately to the swinging vine.

"Help!" he shouted in terror. "Misther Frank, save me."

"Have courage, Barney!" cried Frank, resolutely. "Hang on and I will do my best."

Barney did hang on with all his strength, and Frank cried, turning to the others:

"Draw a bead on the tigers. Be sure and make your shots tell."

The three rifles cracked, and one of the tigers turned over and lay limp and lifeless upon the bottom of the cavern.

The other was hit, but not badly wounded.

The wound, however, had the effect of exciting the animal's rage and with a roar it vanished from sight for a moment.

When it came into sight again it was seen coming up over the edge of the crater to attack its human foes.

Up over the rocks it came with mad leaps.

"Look out!" cried Frank Reade, Jr.; "take good aim at the beast."

The three explorers fired. Whether the bullets struck the beast or not it was not easy to say.

But the tiger came on with long bounds.

Before the repeaters could be worked again the tiger was upon them. He struck Pomp first and the darky went over like a ten-pin.

Buckden rushed to his rescue with clubbed rifle.

But the tiger knocked the rifle from his hands and tumbled him over in a heap.

That moment would have been Tony's last but for Frank, who rushed forward and thrust the muzzle of his rifle close against the hide of the beast.

The bullet penetrated the tiger's heart and he fell dead over Buckden's prostrate form.

It was a narrow escape for all, for the tiger might have killed one of them. Haste was made to relieve Barney from his irksome position.

The exploration was continued, but no other such serious adventure befell our friends.

A few days later they were able to leave the morass behind them.

Nothing worthy of note occurred during the remainder of the trip.

Campeachy was safely reached and there the party received an ovation.

Tony's many friends were overjoyed to see him back alive.

A few days later, however, saw them aboard a return steamer.

New Orleans was safely reached in due time.

Here Mr. Buckden met the party and welcomed them home.

He embraced Tony joyfully and at once made out a check to Frank Reade, Jr., for the reward offered of \$50,000.

But Frank politely declined it, refusing to accept more than enough to cover the actual expenses of the trip.

Tony and his father returned to New York city. At last accounts the young explorer had given up traveling and was engaged in the banking business with his father.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp returned to Readestown safely with the new Steam Man.

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